

# Annual General Meeting 2014

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE KENT BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND (CHARITY NUMBER 1092012, COMPANY NUMBER 04335730) AND THE KENT BRANCH OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND (CHARITY NUMBER 286183) HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2014 AT LENHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

- 1 Both organisations were considered together. Seventy-five members were present and fifteen members sent apologies.
- 2 The minutes of the annual general meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2013 were presented and accepted.
- 3 **President's Address**  
Graham Clarke, President, gave an address in which he thanked Chairman Christine Drury, Director Hilary Newport and her team, and all CPRE Kent members. He spoke of the need to enthuse and encourage younger people, including school age, to be proud of our county and work to preserve it for future generations. He also praised the excellent magazine Kent Voice.
- 4 **Annual Report**  
Director Hilary Newport summarised the work of the branch during the year. The threats to Kent's landscapes fall within the major themes: local plans/planning system; high and rising housing targets; commercial development; transport; energy.
  - 4.1 Planning - the NPPF is bedding in, requires local authorities to have a plan in place that identifies a deliverable five year supply of land for house building. Where plans are absent or out of date, there is a presumption for development. But land development takes a long time. Thank you to Brian Lloyd and district committees for responding to plan consultations. Notable successes include persuading the inspector that the Shepway strategic corridor stretching across the countryside towards Ashford was unjustified. Brian Lloyd, in partnership with KALC (the Kent Association of Local Councils) also trains parish councils and community groups to engage in consultations.
  - 4.2 Housing - we need more affordable, sustainable houses in the right place. CPRE recently demonstrated an increasing number of speculative 'off plan' applications being passed or allowed at appeal. Previously the architect Sir Peter Hall took CPRE and the National Trust to task over their 'overblown' fears for the future of planning, saying "it's not as though anyone is building on the white cliffs of Dover". And yet the decision to allow 521 homes, 90 retirement apartments and a hotel on the Western Heights and Farthingloe provides the most shocking example of dereliction of planning responsibility. We will continue to fight and challenge this.
  - 4.3 Commercial development - there has been a lot of media interest in Waterside Park at J8 of the M20 at Maidstone with the plans for warehousing turned down twice. This is going to appeal in the New Year and we will oppose it for planning reasons. In 2010, an inspector turned down development at Kent International Gateway in order to protect the AONB in this location. We have fewer concerns about the plans for an entertainment resort at Swanscombe, part of the Ebbsfleet Garden City, and a major employer, but will be concentrating on making sure we get the transport right.
  - 4.4 Transport - Kent suffers disproportionately because of its proximity to mainland Europe and the freight travel this causes. The Department of Transport is still deliberating on the third Thames crossing; we are advocating no new crossing but more efficient use of infrastructure. We are pleased the decision has been deferred until after the high speed tolls are implemented - we've been calling for them since 2005.
  - 4.5 We've done lots of work on energy, solar farms being a recurring theme, but now coming to an end in favour of roofs and buildings. Romney Marsh provides an example where grade 1 agricultural land was used for a solar farm - this would have been refused a year later as planning policy has caught up. We've helped parish councils and community groups to respond to solar farm applications. We are now working on campaigns concerning fracking because of the geology of East Kent and the Weald.
  - 4.6 Must also mention the pressure from the threat of flooding (or drought) to our water supply and other natural resources, and we must also consider biodiversity and climate change.
  - 4.7 Christine Drury then spoke of the challenges for next year. Another wet winter could lead to flooding and we will see whether flood prevention work has been effective in areas including Romney Marsh, Yalding, and the River Stour. A flooding conference is being organised on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2015.
  - 4.8 Aviation – aircraft noise now represents a serious challenge to the tranquillity and rural character of the villages and countryside of West Kent, much of it AONB. This will be a major campaign for next year.

- 4.9 Our media work is increasing and we have had excellent coverage over the last two months. The website has been updated, has lots of news and events on it and we are using Facebook and Twitter. We are looking to build up a better photographic library so please come forward if you have any good photos.
- 4.10 Local plans will be an important part of our work next year, two of the most challenging will be the Canterbury and Maidstone Local Plans, we also have site allocations coming up in Tunbridge Wells, with possible impact on the Green Belt, and a Green Belt review in Gravesham.
- 4.11 Finally of course we are in an election year – our sitting MPs and candidates are listening!

5 Treasurer Alan Mepstead presented the **Treasurer’s Report**. The investment portfolio had changed little from the previous year and had performed well. CPRE Kent had invested £230,000 in a property in Maidstone and £250,000 in a charities’ property fund, with 20% of the total capital now in property. The deficit continued to fall from £65,000 last year (the previous year being £80,500 and the year before that £132,000) and this year is expected to be approximately £20,000 plus £14,000 depreciation.

- 5.1 In response to a request from the meeting it was agreed to put the full accounts on the website in advance of the meeting in future years.
- 5.2 The acceptance of the annual accounts was proposed by Alan Holmes and seconded by Richard King and was unanimously accepted with one amendment to change one column heading to 2013/2014.

## 6 ELECTION OF HONORARY OFFICERS

- 6.1 Patrons: The Chairman proposed that the existing Patrons (The Countess Mountbatten and Sir Keith Speed), continue.
- 6.2 Election of President: The Chairman then proposed that Graham Clarke be re-elected as President: carried unanimously
- 6.3 Election of Vice Presidents: The nominations for Vice Presidents were taken *en bloc*: Amanda Cottrell, Tracey Crouch MP, the Rt Hon Damian Green MP and Sir Robert Worcester. Proposed by Alex Hills, seconded by Hilary Moorby, carried unanimously.
- 6.4 Election of Treasurer: Alan Mepstead was proposed as Treasurer by Nigel Britten, seconded by Susan Pitman, carried unanimously.
- 6.5 At this point the Chairman stood down and the President took the chair for the election of the Chairman.
- 6.6 Election of Chairman: Graham Clarke proposed that Christine Drury be re-elected Chairman, carried unanimously.
- 6.7 Christine Drury re-took the chair
- 6.8 Election of Vice Chairmen: Nigel Britten and Dr Peter Bandon were nominated as Vice Chairmen, carried unanimously.
- 6.9 Election of the Board:

The following members who had served the previous year were nominated:

Name	Committee Represented	Name	Committee Represented
Dr Peter Bandon	Swale	Dr Hilary Moorby	Ashford
Gary Thomas	Maidstone	Cally Ware	Tonbridge and Malling
Graham Warren	Environment	Derek Wanstall	Dover
Name	Position	Name	Position
Richard Bate	General Board Member	Richard King	General Board Member

These were proposed by Liz Akenhead and seconded by Peter Whitestone, carried unanimously.

The following new nominations were made:

Name	Position
Cally Ware	Vice President
Graham Warren	Vice President
Dr Robert Baxter	General Board Member

These were proposed by Gary Thomas, seconded by Hilary Moorby and carried unanimously.

### 6.10 Appointment of independent examiners

MacIntyre Hudson were proposed by Alan Mepstead, seconded by Alex Hills, carried unanimously.

## 7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Margaret Micklewright mentioned her programme of outings for the coming year, starting with a belated Christmas lunch at the George Inn, Molash on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

## 8 ADDRESS FROM THE NEW NATIONAL CPRE CHAIRMAN, SU SAYER

Su Sayer began by thanking Margaret Micklewright on behalf of everyone at CPRE Kent for her wonderful programme of social outings and lunches over the last 15 years and presented her with flowers.

Su spoke of growing up in the South Downs and her lifelong love of nature and the countryside. She drew parallels with her work in social care – both subjects she feels passionately about, both wanting to create the best environment for people to live and the ability for people to live the lives they would choose and both about giving people a voice.

Su spoke of the amazing volunteers and dedicated staff she has met at CPRE and of the challenges faced because of short term economic needs dominating the political agenda. She referred to the housing crisis and stressed the importance of building on brownfield sites, mentioning the CPRE Waste of Space campaign. She expressed concern about children being disconnected with the environment. She said she believed there was a move towards cross-party consensus on greenfield protection and the CPRE Manifesto for the General Election would be pushing for this. Su also spoke of involving communities in neighbourhood planning, solar panels on roofs not fields, protecting farmland and she called for the withdrawal of the plans to build on the Western Heights and Farthingloe.

Members asked questions:

Alex Hills asked about the hydrogen economy and Su said she would raise this at the national policy committee.

Charles Wilkinson asked what pressure could be placed on developers to use brownfield sites. Su said she is meeting with the Minister Brandon Lewis on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and this will be raised as well as time limits to planning permissions and funding to local authorities to prepare brownfield sites.

Jill Eddison said the fundamental problem was that there are too many people. Su said this is outside of CPRE's remit.

Christine Drury added that it is the distribution of people which is the problem with too many jobs concentrated in the South East putting pressure on housing.

Liz Akenhead spoke of time limits on plans and said there should be compulsory purchase of derelict sites, such as the old cinema in Tunbridge Wells, and Su said this would be another topic to discuss with the Minister on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **9 Focus on Lenham**

The meeting finished with a presentation and discussion on Lenham. Senior Planner Brian Lloyd gave the planning context, Chair of the Maidstone Committee, Gary Thomas, talked on the Maidstone Local Plan and Vice chairman of Lenham Parish Council Colin Gillett spoke of the challenge the parish council was facing.