

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2015

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 20TH NOVEMBER 2015 AT LENHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

1. Apologies for absence

Both organisations were considered together. Seventy-six members were present and nineteen members sent apologies.

2. Minutes of 2014 AGM

The minutes of the annual general meeting held on 21st November 2014 were presented and accepted subject to one correction: it was noted that Richard Knox-Johnston had been elected as Vice President at the meeting.

3. President's Address

Graham Clarke, President, gave an address and spoke of the wonderful countryside and landscapes providing inspiration to artists including Samuel Palmer, Paul Drury, Graham Sutherland and himself. He thanked CPRE Kent and the landowners and farmers, on behalf of all artists, for all they do to look after the landscapes which feature in so many paintings.

4. To approve the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2015

Treasurer Alan Mepstead presented the Treasurer's Report. The accounts had been posted on the CPRE Kent website in advance and Mr Mepstead thanked Michael Moore for preparing these and the summary. The operating deficit up to March 2015 was just over £21,000, down from £65,000 the year before.

However specific campaigns over the next year may use up to £30,000.

The investment policies remained the same and included unit funds, international unit funds and 15% in property (Queens Head House, a property in Maidstone and investment in the Charities Property Fund). All had performed well and Mr Mepstead thanked the Investment Committee.

The acceptance of the annual accounts was proposed by Amanda Cottrell, seconded by John Wotton and unanimously agreed.

5. Annual Report

Director Hilary Newport summarised the work of the branch during the year. She spoke of the recurring themes of landscape and countryside and its impact on tranquillity, peace and psychological health; dark skies; the stress on water supplies and food security with the pressure of population growth and climate change; energy and transport.

5.1 Energy – Dr Newport mentioned the work campaigning for the Richborough connection link to be placed underground rather than 50m high pylons. She spoke of the phenomenal local opposition to the 9-13 turbine (125m high) wind farm planned for St Nicholas-at-Wade, now on hold. She also spoke of the industrialisation of agricultural land with solar farms. On fracking, she thanked Graham Warren for his fantastic hydrogeology work on the risk in the Weald basin, in particular the risk to aquifers in our severely water stressed area.

5.2 Transport – Dr Newport said there is uncertainty over the announcement of the preferred Lower Thames Crossing route, we consider both options environmentally damaging and are concerned at the 80% increase in freight over the last 20 years. We want national and international policies on transport to

address this and to prevent the problems caused by Operation Stack this summer. On aviation expansion she spoke of air quality issues which may mean Heathrow is ruled out and Gatwick expansion is back on the agenda; also the implications for tranquillity in West Kent, already suffering unbearable noise from the flight paths concentrating aircraft over a narrow trajectory. Meanwhile Manston's future remains uncertain with plans for major housing and employment development.

5.3 Development and housing – Dr Newport spoke of Ebbsfleet Garden City and London Paramount Entertainment Resort which we support, being on brownfield land. However we have concerns over transport and water shortages and are involved with stakeholder groups. One major campaign has been against the 600+ homes planned for Farthingloe and the Western Heights which is going to Judicial Review in December. The decision to grant permission should have been called in by the Secretary of State and we have the letter recommending this. We had some good news with the Waterside Park inquiry which we won with the inspector agreeing the harm to the setting of the AONB and Leeds Castle would have been unacceptable. On local plans, Dr Newport mentioned the planning team's constant work on consultations and examinations, most recently Canterbury and Swale. It is becoming increasingly hard to support a planned system with the unacceptably high housing targets being set, e.g. 12,000 houses in Thanet – now bumped up to 15,600 despite strong local opposition and the constraints of prime agricultural land which needs protecting.

5.4 Chairman Christine Drury outlined some of the priorities for the next year. She said retaining agricultural land is phenomenally important, we cannot keep covering it with solar panels. Water resources are an important issue – we have been campaigning on this since publishing our water strategy for Kent in 2006 (written by Graham Warren). On tranquillity, she mentioned that Natural England (NE) has credited CPRE's work on tranquillity methodology enabling NE to create landscape character areas. Heritage has moved up the planning agenda, e.g. it was a major factor in the Waterside Park decision. Mrs Drury mentioned the work Graham Horner has done with the Historic Buildings Committee to identify heritage at risk in the county. She mentioned housing targets, based on economic dreams and aspirations rather than real need and raised questions about resources (water and energy), constraints (AONB, agricultural land) and the fact that many are undeliverable because of a skills gap. Mrs Drury drew attention to some of the excellent national office reports, e.g. 'Set up to Fail' on the housing targets. She paid tribute to CPRE Surrey campaigner Kristina Kenworthy who has worked tirelessly on our Farthingloe JR action and finally managed to get the un-redacted advice that the decision should have been called in. Finally she paid tribute to the commitment and expertise of our members and volunteers with their time so generously given and said we would never give up.

5.5 Christine Drury presented the following staff and volunteers with medals and certificates for their work for CPRE Kent:

Senior Planner Brian Lloyd "for his exceptional work at the forefront of influencing planning policy across Kent, particularly his invaluable contributions to consultations on local plans".

Chairman of Canterbury Committee Barrie Gore "for his role as chairman for Canterbury and his work on Night Blight campaigns and campaigning against the over-illumination of Canterbury cathedral".

Chairman of the Historic Buildings Committee (and formerly Conservation Officer and Director of the branch) Robert Baxter "for his fantastic commitment to a variety of roles as a Conservation Officer, Director of CPRE Kent, and as a Trustee supporting the branch in various capacities".

She also thanked Alan Mepstead for serving as Treasurer for the last two years and Margaret Micklewright for organising the programme of social outings and activities.

5. Election of Honorary Officers

5.1 Patrons: The Chairman informed the meeting that Sir Keith Speed had regrettably declined to continue as Patron but wished CPRE Kent well. She proposed that the existing Patron Lady Mountbatten continue in the role and this was unanimously approved.

5.2 President: The Chairman proposed Graham Clarke and this was unanimously approved.

5.3 Vice Presidents: the Vice Presidents were nominated *en bloc* by the Chairman: Amanda Cottrell, OBE DL, Tracey Crouch MP, the Rt Hon Damian Green MP, Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL, Dr Hilary Moorby and Richard Knox-Johnston; plus new for this year Helen Whately MP (Faversham and Mid-Kent). This was unanimously approved.

5.4 Treasurer: Michael Moore was nominated by the Chairman and this was unanimously approved. At this point the Chairman stood down and the President took the chair for the election of the Chairman.

5.5 Chairman: the President proposed Christine Drury and this was unanimously approved. Christine Drury re-took the chair.

5.6 Vice Chairmen: Nigel Britten and Dr Peter Blandon were nominated as Vice Chairmen and this was unanimously approved.

5.7 The Board: The following members who had served the previous year were nominated and this was approved unanimously: Richard Bate; Richard King; Dr Peter Blandon (Swale); Nigel Britten (Sevenoaks); Dr Alan Holmes OBE (Canterbury); Gary Thomas (Maidstone); Derek Wanstall (Dover); plus returning Board members Cally Ware (Tonbridge and Malling); Graham Warren (Environment Committee).

5.8 Appointment of independent examiners: MHA Macintyre Hudson were nominated and this was unanimously approved.

6. Any other business

Felicity Simpson commented that she was glad CPRE was taking up the five year land supply issue and also paid great credit to Richard Knox-Johnston and the team for the success at Waterside Park.

Richard Knox-Johnston reported in his role as CPRE SE Chairman on the issues of landbanking and devolution, stressing how great the powers of the new authorities will be and his concern over the lack of any reference to the environment in the devolution documents from Hampshire to Oxfordshire.

Phil Sulley commented on whether local councils were making enough brownfield sites available for development but was heartened that it is at least on the agenda.

Alex Hills clarified the title of Paramount Park as Paramount London Leisure Resort.

7. Keynote speaker: Dr Andrew Brown, Planning and Conservation Director, South East Planning Group, Historic England

The meeting finished with a talk on “Championing Kent’s Historic Environment” by Dr Andrew Brown. He described how Kent’s historic environment can enrich our lives and mentioned some of his personal favourite places including Waldershare Belvedere, Denge sound mirrors, Cobham Mausoleum, Pugin’s hallway at The Grange, Gravesend High Street, Tudeley Church and Chatham Memorial. He talked about Historic England having demerged from English Heritage and also explained the budget cuts which constrained the organisation’s work – by 2020 it will be one third the size it was in 2010. He also paid tribute to CPRE Kent’s work on the historic environment and described how the organisations could work to support each other.