

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2016

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 19TH NOVEMBER 2016 AT LENHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

1. Apologies for absence

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

2. Minutes of 2015 AGM

The minutes of the annual general meeting held on 20th November 2015 were presented and accepted.

3. President's Address

Graham Clarke, President, gave an address and considered the abundance of building materials in Kent, more than in any other county. He talked of clay, flint and flint pebbles used in beautiful coastline buildings, chalk used in cement, the wealth of trees used in the Wealden Hall houses, oak and chestnut, rag stone and ironstone and Bethersden marble, made of snails, and used in the county's two cathedrals. This led on to his wonderful poem on St Eanswyth who built England's first nunnery at Folkestone – see our website for the poem.

4. To receive the annual report

Director Hilary Newport spoke about some of the campaigning work of the last year, particularly on housing development, infrastructure, transport and local plans. We are facing intense pressure for development with the added pressures of climate change, population pressures and global food security. A highlight this year was getting the planning permission at Farthingloe overturned at the Court of Appeal and this attracted national media coverage and a lot of local support.

North Kent's flagship housing scheme Ebbsfleet Garden city stalled because of recession but is this year finally picking up and will ultimately deliver 15k homes on a brownfield site in the Thames gateway: we support this because it will deliver much-needed housing but recognise there are issues with congestion and water supply.

We are less convinced about Otterpool Park – Shepway already has 8000 homes in its local plan but is now planning 12000 more, with support from Government. We fear this will suck in additional households to an area that is already congested, water stressed and subject to intense development pressures.

We have engaged in consultations on plans to build two communications masts at Richborough which will become the tallest structures in Europe. We opposed the Operation Stack lorry park plans believing this to be the wrong solution. Hilary Newport gave evidence to the Commons Select transport committee which agreed with her but this did not influence Government which is pressing ahead. Similarly, we had little success in arguing against proposals for a new Thames crossing east of Gravesend. This tunnel will reduce traffic at Dartford by just 14% - a pitifully small improvement, and a major loss of green field/green belt land.

The Government affirmed support for a third Heathrow runway. We keep a wary eye on Gatwick's attempts to join it: support for either runway can only be at the expense of other airports and serves to pull yet more heat into the south east.

CPRE throughout its 90-year history has wholeheartedly supported a plan led system, giving certainty to residents, developers, infrastructure providers, the people who decide where to put schools and hospitals. But this is increasingly difficult to support because housing targets are set needlessly high and where councils can't demonstrate a five-year supply, some speculative 'off plan' applications are getting through or going to appeal which we then fight. Plus, we are doing huge amounts of work in the Medway, Canterbury, Maidstone, Swale, Shepway consultations.

Chairman Christine Drury thanked CPRE staff, district and specialist committee members for their work over the year. We may face a further hearing on Farthingloe if the Supreme Court thinks there is a case so we need to be prepared. We will continue to push for good quality development on brownfield land – the Government seems to be getting this message. Dover is taking part in a brownfield register pilot. CPRE's new national president Emma Bridgewater is committed to brownfield first to help regeneration. We will engage with local plans and appeals. In 2017 we will participate in CPRE's housing foresight work – these reports highlight issues such as landbanking. The Government is listening; another housing bill is due next week and will hopefully have measures to discourage landbanking. We will need to prioritise our work on local plans and large planning applications as there are too many to comment on all and we need to do more training hope for our volunteers and to help parish councils. We are trying to build our membership – members provide the legitimacy for our campaigning as well as finances, time and energy of our volunteers. Do think about gift membership as a Christmas present. At our 90th anniversary garden party we involved our Surrey, Sussex and London branches: we will continue to work closely with them on related campaigns.

Vice President Richard Knox-Johnston talked of the work of the County Branches Forum and the South East Region – Oxfordshire, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Berkshire, East and West Sussex and Surrey. He talked of the work with the London Green Belt Council on safeguarding the Green Belt and the threats, highlighted by the report Safe Under Us, produced by CPRE London. He highlighted the importance of heritage and air quality as well as landscape in planning decisions. He mentioned the Local Enterprise Partnerships and their lack of accountability, and the constant pressure for growth pushing up the housing numbers.

5. To approve the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2016

Treasurer Michael Moore presented the Treasurer's Report. The accounts had been posted on the CPRE Kent website in advance. The branch had received £245,000 in memberships and legacies which was significantly up on the previous year due to a generous legacy. Including the investment income, total income was £431,603. Total expenditure was £401,000. The branch would carry forward £201,000 undesignated funds. Total assets amounted to £5,361,000. The branch was in a good position mainly due to careful management of the Read legacy.

The acceptance of the annual report and accounts was unanimously agreed.

6. Election of Honorary Officers

5.1 Chairman: Christine Drury was proposed by Amanda Cottrell, seconded by Nigel Britten, this was unanimously approved.

5.2 Vice Presidents: the Vice Presidents were nominated *en bloc* by Hilary Moorby, seconded by Graham Horner: Amanda Cottrell, OBE DL, Tracey Crouch MP, the Rt Hon Damian Green MP, Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL, Richard Knox-Johnston, Helen Whately MP, Richard King and Dr Alan Holmes OBE. This was unanimously approved.

5.3 Vice Chairmen and Treasurer: Joint Vice Chairmen Nigel Britten and Peter Blandon and Treasurer Michael Moore were nominated by Susan Pittman, seconded by John Wotton and this was unanimously approved.

5.4 The Board: The following members who had served the previous year were nominated by Alan Holmes, seconded by Peter Whitestone and this was approved unanimously: Richard Bate; Dr Peter Blandon (Swale); Nigel Britten (Sevenoaks); Gary Thomas (Maidstone); Derek Wanstall (Dover); Graham Warren (Environment Committee). Plus, returning Board member Dr Hilary Moorby (Ashford) and new Board members Val Loseby (chair of Shepway Committee) and John Wotton (chair of Historic Buildings committee).

5.5 Auditors: Alan Holmes proposed and Nigel Britten seconded the appointment of MHA Macintyre Hudson as auditors, unanimously approved.

6. Any other business

Susannah Richter asked for more feedback, ideas and contributions to Kent Voice and other communications. She asked members to follow CPRE Kent on its website and on Facebook and Twitter – both of which we have a good presence on and growing influence and engagement. Facebook has 628 page likes – up more than 50% over the last two years and we have 3,252 Twitter followers with some Tweets seen by tens of thousands. Please contact her with any feedback or ideas and to consider writing a blog or article for Kent Voice or taking photos.

Phil Sulley asked about sites in Yalding and also developers having a time limit within which they must build the planned development with permission. Christine Drury said she hoped the new planning bill would tackle this and have measures to prevent landbanking.

People were asked by a show of hands whether they would prefer a morning AGM followed by lunch and this was agreed to begin in 2017.

7. Sue Chalkley, Chief executive of Hastoe Housing Association, spoke about getting affordable rural homes built. A copy of her presentation can be found on our website:

<https://cprekent.org.uk/events/agm-2016/>

8. Date of next meeting: 17th November 2017, 10.30am, Lenham Community Centre.