



The countryside charity
Kent

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2020

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 NOVEMBER 13 2020 AT LENHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

1. Attendance and apologies for absence

Both charities were considered together. Fifty-eight members were present via video conference link and eight members sent apologies.

2. Minutes of 2019 AGM

The minutes of the annual general meeting held on November 13th 2019 were presented and accepted unanimously.

3. Chairman's Welcome

Chairman John Wotton welcomed all present, and introduced the review of the past year's work.

4. Annual report

Hilary Newport, Director, reflected on the events of the past eight months during Covid-19 lockdown and told the meeting that despite the significant changes to working practices since March 2020 the branch had been busier than ever, involved in many long-running and new planning challenges to Kent's Countryside.

The application for a Development Consent Order for the Lower Thames Crossing was submitted two weeks before the date of the AGM and was awaiting validation by the Planning Inspectorate, after years of consultation and engagement. We expect to be heavily involved in the examination of the application.

Manston Airport was granted permission to open as a freight hub despite our objections and against the recommendation of the Inspectors, who raised significant concerns over the environmental impacts of the scheme.

Plans for a new Garden Town on greenfield land at Otterpool are progressing, and in most other districts of Kent so-called garden towns are being proposed to fulfil the high housing targets that are set by the National Planning Policy Framework.

The UK's largest solar farm at Cleve Hill in Swale was permitted, overriding concerns about the landscape impact and the unproven technology to be used for energy storage by the scheme.

We objected to plans to extend a Park & Ride facility onto water meadow at Wincheap on the banks of the River Stour, and went as far as lodging a request for Judicial Review of the scheme before Canterbury City Council realised that the scheme was unworkable and withdrew their plans. I

A recent decision by Natural England has halted all development within the catchment area of the River Stour, due to concerns over the increasing build-up of nutrients in the sensitive Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve. This has had widespread impacts on the delivery of housing in the boroughs of Canterbury, Ashford and Maidstone.

After some delays and uncertainty due to Covid and the lockdown, the programme of work on responding to consultations and examinations of Local Plans has continued unabated. Over the course of the year we have made input to plans at various stages in Tonbridge & Malling, Thanet, Medway, Maidstone, Folkestone & Hythe and Canterbury

We will continue to campaign with National CPRE and with other branches across England for less damaging changes to the Planning System which were proposed in August. The draft White Paper, called Planning for the Future, proposes some good ambitions, but also some changes which are a significant cause for concern. The proposals would create a democratic deficit in removing 'uncertainty' from planning through zoning where permission will be largely guaranteed. Consultation on these proposals will be a major strand of work for the coming year

Our work is more important than ever as lockdown has increased peoples' appreciation of the value of the green space around them. Lockdown has shown the way that we can change our behaviour drastically and we must not let the changes we have made for the better protection of the environment to be lost.

5. Chairman's Report

Chairman John Wotton reflected on an extraordinary year, in which we have all had to adapt to restrictions on our normal lives. He paid tribute to the staff and

volunteers who have kept the work of the charity going, including Linde Wotton who helped us all to learn how to use video-conferencing so that we could all stay in touch and hold meetings. He also thanked Susan Pittman and Alex Hills, who both won well-deserved awards at the CPRE Autumn Conference.

As the result of the requirement for trustees to stand down from the board after five years' service, we are sadly losing Graham Warren's service as a trustee, but we still value very highly his work with our environment committee. Mike Moore must also stand down from his role as treasurer, although if elected he will be able to serve as an ordinary trustee for the coming year. We are grateful to Julian Glenister FCA, a chartered accountant working in Folkestone, for agreeing to stand as treasurer for the coming year.

Thanks were also paid to Andrew Wells, who has retired from the Historic Buildings Committee, and to Paul Smallwood who has retired from both the Historic Buildings Committee and the Shepway Area Committee. In addition, the Chairman thanked all those who make CPRE Kent's work possible: our committee members and their chairs, our Patron Sir Robert Worcester, our President Graham Clarke, and all our vice presidents.

We will continue with our forward plan and our development guide, and with recruiting the volunteers we need to broaden our work to increase the impact that we can make and make sure that members find their participation rewarding.