

CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND CAMBRIDGESHIRE BRANCH

The Annual General Meeting was held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 6 July 2010 in the Visitor Centre, Paxton Pits Nature Reserve, Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire.

Present: Mike Bratby (Chair), Shirley Fieldhouse, Gareth Ridewood, Sean Traverse-Healy, Dennis Conner, Betty Connor, Ms J Houghton, Margaret Helme, Ian Griffiths, Gill Griffiths, Lawrence Wragg, Christopher Gravatt, Gareth Ridewood, Ivan Ivanovic, Michael Hellowell, Michael Monk, Simon Norton, Judith Wallace, Roger Hall, Barbara Richmond, Sean Traverse-Healy. **Visitors:** Anna Bratby, Tracey Hipson (Branch Co-ordinator), John Hipson, Kristina Ketzold, Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey (President), Jeremy Hill (CPRE East of England), Robin Page (speaker), Lulu Page, John Terry.

Chairman's welcome. Mr Bratby welcomed all to the meeting, including Robin Page, the speaker, Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey, Branch President, and Jeremy Hill, the new CPRE East of England Regional Policy Officer. The Branch had had a successful year; it was in a strong financial position and had maintained its membership, bucking the national trend. The Branch had run a workshop on the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in November 2009, and this had informed the Branch's submission to EERA. The RSS had been suspended and the Branch was waiting to see what changes to the planning system were introduced to the new government. It was difficult to see how new developments and infrastructure could be put in place without regional planning of some sort. The Branch would be sending a representative to the national office seminar on planning on 28 July, and would be holding its own workshop, inviting other environmental organisations, in due course. The Branch would also be considering transport issues, especially the proposed changes to the A14 and its impact on Huntingdon. A successful hedge laying weekend, in conjunction with Cambridge Past, Present and Future, had been held in the autumn and it was hoped to run a similar event this year. National CPRE was conducting both a Brand Review, which aimed to create a better marketing strategy and stronger CPRE "brand" to attract new members, and a Supporter Review, which aimed to streamline the current membership categories and procedures and allow supporters to become more involved with their local branch. It was hoped that both reviews would lead to a more effective and stronger CPRE. Finally, Mr Bratby thanked the committee and all those involved with the Branch for their hard work and support.

President Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey addressed the meeting. He said that, last year, he had spoken about the difficulties faced by organisations like CPRE as the county recovered from the financial crisis. The new government proposed major cutbacks on spending, especially on local authorities and services. EEDA had been abolished and local authorities would have to fend for themselves. This lack of resources and expertise could be easily exploited by a property developer. CPRE was able to speak on behalf of the majority of the population on controversial planning issues and raise its profile at the same time. It was as important as ever that CPRE worked in co-operation with other environmental organisations such as the Wildlife Trust and Cambridge Past Present and Future, among others, to promote common causes and influence government policy. Paxton Pits Visitor and Education Centre – funded by the Wildlife Trust, owned and maintained by Huntingdonshire District Council and used by organisations like CPRE – was a good example of organisations working together and moving forward through co-operation. Sir Charles thanked the Committee, volunteers and members for their support.

- 1. Apologies.** Marina Voikhanskaya, Stan and Shirley Haynes, Ray Gambell, Anthony Cooper, Aileen Adams, Grace Everson, Alison Sargent, Richard and Coralie Sandimans, Jonathan Houghton.
- 2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 9 July 2009.** The minutes were approved: Proposed: Shirley Fieldhouse. Seconded: Jennifer Houghton.
- 3. To approve the Annual Report.** The Annual Report was approved. Proposed: Sean Traverse-Healy. Seconded: Michael Hellowell.
- 4. To approve the Annual Accounts.** Mr Bratby introduced new Treasurer Roger Hall. Mr Hall commented that the Branch finances were very healthy with reserves of almost £30k. A new accounting software package had been introduced, as had internet banking, a budget and quarterly finance reports. The Annual Accounts were approved. Proposed: Gareth Ridewood. Seconded: Dennis Conner. Vote carried in favour.

5. To approve revised Branch Constitution. Mr Bratby set out the main changes to the constitution: Peterborough added to the Branch name. We now have strong representation there; reference to now defunct District Groups has been taken out, although the new constitution allows for District Groups to be established if the situation changes; officers and members now to serve for 6 years maximum as trustees, with possible extension of one year. However, the CPRE National Office Board has granted a concession for the coming year; provision made for internet banking; the number of members needed to be quorate for an AGM amended from 20 to 15. There were also other cosmetic changes. The revised Constitution had been approved by CPRE Board. The Branch Constitution was approved. Proposed: Lawrence Wragg. Seconded: Michael Hellowell. Vote carried in favour.

6. Election of officers of the Cambridgeshire Branch.

Chairman: Mike Bratby had been granted a concession by national office to serve until the end of 2010. Michael Monk had offered to become Branch Chairman from then. He would be co-opted and then stand for election at the 2011 AGM.

Treasurer: Mr Bratby thanked former treasurers Christopher Gravatt and Lawrence Wragg and recommended Roger Hall elected as treasurer.

Mike Bratby (Chairman), Roger Hall (Treasurer): Proposed: Shirley Fieldhouse, this was Seconded by Gareth Ridewood.

7. Election of members to serve on the Branch Committee. Grace Everson, John McGill and Sean Traverse-Healy stood down. CPRE national office had granted an extension to allow Miss Fieldhouse to serve for a further year. The following had been nominated and were elected: Christopher Gravatt (Meldreth), Shirley Fieldhouse (Cambridge), Sally Jackson (Peterborough), Michael Hellowell (Horningsea) and Gareth Ridewood (Huntingdon). Proposed: Dennis Conner. Seconded: Anna Bratby. President Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey thanked Mr Traverse-Healy for his work and presented him with a gift on behalf of the Branch.

8. To approve the appointment of the Independent Examiner of the Accounts

Mr Hall said that he would be investigating other firms of auditors in the coming year but asked that Staffords be approved for now. Approval was given to the appointment of: Staffords, Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, Capital Park, Fulbourn, Cambridge CB21 5XE. Proposed by Roger Hall and Seconded by Sean Traverse-Healy.

AOB: Mr Norton raised concerns about the accessibility of the countryside and the impact on rural transport of government spending cuts. Mr Bratby said that the Branch committee will look at rural transport, including the A14, when government policy was clearer. The Committee would make sure it was well-informed and would comment or campaign on transport issues as appropriate.

Mr Bratby closed the meeting at 8.10pm.

Guest Speaker – Robin Page

Robin Page started off by describing his relationship, over many years, with CPRE and some of the people involved with it.

As Chairman of the Countryside Restoration Trust, he felt that many of the issues faced by CPRE and CRT were similar: the number of people moving into the countryside, and the strain this put on resources; unsustainable development takes no account of local needs, services and infrastructure; food insecurity, and the fact that the UK is not self-sufficient in food production, with only 60% of our food produced in the UK – the rest is imported; the crisis facing farmers – intensify or go under. He felt that there should be an emphasis on strong rural communities, linking work and housing, increased food production, with mixed development to minimise out of town commuting. People need to live and work in the same community. He said that eco-towns were unsustainable.

Robin then spoke about the farms managed by the Countryside Restoration Trust and how they work. It was important to show farmers what to do by example – not just to tell them. The CRT's farms promote farming

that encourages wildlife, and uses traditional rural skills such as hedge -laying. He emphasised that the CRT's farms were conventional farms, and like any others were trying to make money; they use modern equipment and pesticides. They were not organic as they were trying to encourage mainstream farmers. Robin was concerned about the increase in predator numbers and felt that choices were needed about predators such as foxes, crows and grey squirrels. He also spoke about the native species that were thriving on the CRT's farms – hares, otters, bees, butterflies, skylarks, and wildflowers such as bee orchids.

In conclusion he said that the battle continues – there is a crisis in farming and the countryside, and organisations like CRT and CPRE should work together.