



The countryside charity
Cambridgeshire
and Peterborough

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

September 2022



Chairman's report - page 2 Peterborough - 5 Fenland - 6 East Cambridgeshire - 7
Huntingdonshire - 8 Media Activity - 8 Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshires - 9
Finance Report - 11 Social Media - 12 About CPRE - 14

Chairman's report

Alan James

As we come out of lockdown and into a supposedly post-COVID period, there is good news and bad news. We held our 2021 AGM remotely and it was well attended, and were able to amend our Constitution to enable us to hold future meetings of all types electronically with appropriate notice. This will save a lot of evening travel which is especially welcome in winter.

A significant effect of the lockdown appears to have been a permanent change in many organisations' work practices and, with it, major change in the use of and requirement for commercial premises clustered in town and city centres. Some organisations have closed their workplaces permanently and are now working 100% from home or other remote locations, such as local internet hubs.

Others have downsized their workplaces to be consistent with their use by business-critical staff and for meeting and training purposes only. This has enabled them to release floor space and reduce their rental and business rate costs.

Others have maintained their workplaces but altered the layout to facilitate hybrid working on-demand in a less crowded and improved work environment. Staff attend when they have a need to and workstations are subject to a booking system.

This is having a significant effect on commuting patterns. There are reports that peak road traffic appears to have stabilised at 50 – 70% of pre-COVID levels. This despite car-based commuting as a proportion of commuter journeys being higher than it was because people remain wary of using public transport. This has become particularly apparent with continued low passenger numbers on many rail routes.

Hopefully, these changes coupled with a concerted attempt by local and national authorities to encourage greater use of public transport by making it more accessible, coupled with support for increased active travel by making cycling and walking easier, safer and more enjoyable, will help reduce pollution and carbon emissions from transport, the single greatest emitter in the UK according to the Climate Change Committee. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/>. However, the

Committee states in their 2021 report to Government:

“Surface transport is off track, and since 2015 has been the highest-emitting sector in the UK. Emissions have been broadly flat over the past decade, falling only 1% between 2009 and 2019. Improvements to the efficiency of cars have been lost to a trend towards both driving larger vehicles and driving more miles.”

This is not good news and much more needs to be done in a county like our own with widely dispersed settlements, to reduce emissions from travel. One approach may be to actively encourage the re-purposing of empty or under-used

commercial buildings in town and city centres, perhaps by turning them into new kinds of service hubs and/or residential accommodation. The latter, however, must be done properly with emphasis on appropriate design standards and full planning and building control. The appalling results of the current “permitted development” regime must be halted and reversed.

The greatest issue facing us all remains climate change. As we have indicated in the Fenland report, it is concerning that the International Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, state in their 2021 report findings that 1.5°C warming will be reached or exceeded in the early 2030s. For Fenland, this will increase the threat from sea level rise. For all of us, it will mean more uncertain weather, increasingly intense thunderstorms, increased probability of greater rainfall intensity, increased summer heat and drought, increased risk of wildfires, changing plant growth patterns, migration of animal and insect populations to cooler regions, greater risk to food supplies across the globe giving rise to rapidly increasing food costs and possible civil unrest. For Cambridgeshire and Peterborough it is increasing flood risk which will cause the greatest cost to property and infrastructure.

I am not sure how we persuade people and authorities that we must do more to both reduce climate impacts and mitigate against them. The recent 40-50°C temperatures in parts of Europe and Asia seem not to be seen as something which could occur here. Yet is not 40.3°C in Coningsby in July a warning? The fact that in June 2022 parts of north-east India and Bangladesh have experienced one year's normal average rainfall for the UK in 3 days, that a single lightning strike killed 17 people in the north-eastern Indian state of Bihar or that

... it will mean more uncertain weather, increasingly intense thunderstorms, increased probability of greater rainfall intensity, increased summer heat...

intense rainfall last year wreaked havoc in parts of Germany seems to be lost on our government and population.

We are already seeing the effects of climate change, albeit exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, on migration and the cost and availability of several foodstuffs. This is a global emergency and we all have our part to play.

The UK Government continues to want to make building easier, including building on floodplains. Although the unpopular Planning White Paper seems to have been abandoned, it has been replaced by the so-called Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. This appears to contain several attacks on the planning system which are likely to extend the damage to the countryside and communities already caused by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is a very complex item of legislation with the Contents list alone running to 10 pages and the whole document to some 325 pages.

Yet it contains many implications for all of us, too numerous to highlight here.

One hopefully positive outcome of the levelling-up agenda, is the apparent removal of the Ox-Cam Arc as a formal government planning objective. The concern now is the probability of pressures to achieve the same end but in a piecemeal manner. The green fields of the south-east remain the region where land prices and house prices are highest and where developers can make most money. For this reason, we have continued to stress that re-use and re-purposing of the estimated 0.5 – 1 million empty homes, mostly outside the south-east and building on the 1.3 million registered brownfield sites, will make much needed housing available more quickly, with less carbon emissions and frequently in locations where economic uplift and levelling up is urgently required. Inward migration to the south-east to achieve employment growth while building on land needed to grow food just does not make sense.

We have continued to point out at every opportunity that modern industries such as software, robotics, pharmaceutical and medical research and agricultural research do not need to be clustered together in some kind of UK version of Research Triangle in NC USA. Such clustering was a 1960s' concept designed in a time when there was no internet and not even conference phone calling and when business air travel was necessary to achieve co-operation. Those days are now past and even a little company like mine can carry on its business and sell and support its products globally 24/7 with no need for travel or clustering.

...continue to press for more joined up thinking in the search for solutions to the transport issues around Cambridge...

We will continue to work with our colleagues in the other CPRE branches affected by the Ox-Cam Arc to try and ensure that it does not return in one form or another. <https://www.challengethearc.co.uk/>

In this work we were encouraged by the Levelling Up White Paper whose Technical Annex stated:

“Mission 2: By 2030, domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40%, and over the Spending Review period by at least one third. This additional government funding will seek to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth,

and...

achieving the mission will require sustained and targeted increases in public R&D investment, as well as increased investment by business. It will be driven by a change in the way the UK

Government invests. For example, for the first time, BEIS will commit to invest at least 55% of its funding outside the GSE by 2024–25. In addition, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) will increase National Institute for Health Research investment outside London, Oxford and Cambridge, while the Ministry of Defence will enhance and accelerate

R&D spend across the UK through the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy.”

Levelling Up Missions, their setting, reporting, revision and review, form Part 1 of the Levelling Up Bill now before Parliament.

We continue to be exercised by ‘greenwash’ such as ‘bio-diversity net gain’, and ‘doubling nature’. The buying up of land for claimed bio-diversity net gain off-setting, usually by planting rows of conifers, in some areas of the country where farming returns are low, is becoming an increasing threat to the survival of some communities in parts of Wales and Scotland.

We have continued to press for more joined up thinking in the search for solutions to the transport issues around Cambridge, and continue to call for an integrated transport plan for the Greater Cambridge area with rail at its core. This could be achieved by using a cost-effective route for East-West Rail, fitted with in-cab signalling to facilitate metro services on shared lines and into major communities such as the city, Northstowe and Cambourne. Re-opening the Colne Valley line to Colchester via Haverhill and Sudbury is a no-brainer. One only has to monitor how often one or both of the existing Cam-London lines are having

problems to realise that a third alternative would be good news for many people.

Unfortunately, there is currently a 'silo' approach to transport planning which has also led to a 'silo' approach to campaigning for/against particular transport issues. So, we have proposals and campaign groups relating to each busway, East-West Rail, the Haverhill re-opening, more buses, cycleways etc. Somehow, we need to help bring about a coherent alternative which is clear, concise and unarguable in transport, climate and economic terms.

We continue to be concerned by the number of planning applications, often for the most damaging projects, that are being made via the National Infrastructure Commission (NISC) route in order to avoid proper scrutiny by local planning authorities and local communities. Currently, these include:

- A428 improvement.
- East-West Rail.
- Movement of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment (WWT) plant into the Green Belt.
- Sunnica solar installation.
- Wisbech waste incinerator.
- Greater Cambridge Partnership busways ...and with others in the pipeline.

We continue to try and make it clear to local planning authorities that they must properly consult local Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) when examining or making their own planning applications in their districts. The lack of understanding by planners of the vital role which IDBs play in keeping Fen communities and countryside safe from flooding in winter and drought in summer is worrying and because of the knowledge, skills and engineering capabilities of the IDBs is a missed opportunity for better planning outcomes.

We have recently challenged South Cambridgeshire District Council concerning their failure to properly take notice of IDB objections and advice in relation to the Northstowe development, where a legal challenge has now arisen which could have been avoided.

The Bottisham 'retirement village' in a conservation area was rejected for a second time on appeal.

The application by the Great Ouse Valley Trust (GOVT) for Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status continues to progress and GOVT are continuing to bring the Ouse Valley Way back to a good standard for walkers and visitors and to publicise its green space attractions.

The influence of Friends of the Cam and their effective voice on issues such as over abstraction from the chalk aquifer, raw sewage discharge into the river, protection of the flora and fauna of the

river and the publicity of the benefits that a clean river brings to the community is a great achievement.

In the north of the county, we have been able to support several beneficial planning applications and we have recognised the excellent work of the Langdyke Trust protecting the countryside to the north-west of Peterborough.

In East Cambridgeshire we responded to the second part of the consultation in support of the plans to complete the upgrade of the east-west freight rail route between Felixstowe and Nuneaton.

We maintained our objection to the A10/M11 Travel Hub in the Green Belt where our primary concerns are that it will encourage car use and result in ribbon development along the whole length of the A10 from Trumpington to Harston. Unfortunately, the County Council has now approved this development and the Secretary of State has not called in that decision.

With your help and support we will double our efforts to protect our precious countryside, to counter the causes and effects of climate change on it and to ensure healthy, vibrant rural communities within it.

Jo McGowan has settled in to the post of Branch and Regional Administrator and I am increasingly reminded of all the tasks I have not completed.

Tracey Hipson remains with us in her consultancy role and Tracey has worked with our IT providers to guide the layout and development of the new website which is now live. It includes the new sections introduced on the old site to help promote rural food producers and local rural businesses, most of the content for which has been provided by Lizzie Bannister. If you would like your business to be featured, free of charge, in either section, please send an email to office@cprecambs.org.uk.

I am very sorry to say that due to serious illness, our long-time Vice Chairman, **Lawrence Wragg**, has been forced to resign. I don't think I can thank Lawrence enough for all the effort that he has put into CPRE, nationally and locally, over the years. Lawrence has not only served CPRE loyally and effectively, he was a key member of many other local organisations over many years, including the Cam Valley Forum, Natural Cambridgeshire and Fowlmere Parish Council which he chaired. Lawrence has been an irreplaceable source of advice and guidance to me and I am already missing that greatly. I am sure you will join with me in wishing him well at this very difficult time.

Peterborough

Sally Jackson

The Peterborough area is fortunate to be the home of the John Clare Countryside Project.

Their objective is:

“We want the countryside around us to be an area where nature is at the heart of our lives. Where swifts and swallows are a central feature of our summer evenings, where otters continue to enthral people as they play in the Maxey Cut, where bees and other insects thrive, not decline, and where there are far more, not less, ponds, meadows, wild flowers, hedgerows and trees. And where people can walk or cycle out in safety and tranquillity across this thriving countryside, enjoying the sights and sounds and even the silence of the natural world; enjoying dark skies and cherishing the heritage around them – both natural and man-made. That sounds like a countryside worth living in.”

<http://langdyke.org.uk/projects/john-clare-vision/>

The north and west of Peterborough is the birthplace of John Clare, one of the country's most significant poets of the natural world. He was born in Helpston in 1793 and lived an eventful life in several local villages until finally dying in Northampton General Lunatic Asylum in 1864.

The driving force behind the John Clare Countryside Project, is to reintroduce the spirit of the pre-Enclosure landscapes, so eloquently recorded by John Clare in his poetry, into today's industrialised countryside.

The community led Parish Nature Recovery Plan was launched in September 2019 at, what turned out to be, a vital time for understanding the value of easy access to nature. It involves 16 parishes, covering 11,500 Hectares and stretching from the Welland in the north to the Nene in the south and from the Fens in the East to Burghley Park and Stamford in the West.

It aims to double the area of land managed for nature, over this area, from 8.5% to 17% by 2023. It includes churchyards, allotments, road verges, school grounds, village greens, woodland, wetland including drains and ponds, orchards, hedgerows, footpaths, nature reserves, farmland and gardens. Local Parish Councils have signed up to take part and each has produced its own list of priorities. We have had great support from PECT, Nene Park, Natural England, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, Peterborough City

Council, Welland Rivers Trust and Sacrewell Farm. Many local individuals have given freely of their time and professional expertise.

Projects organised and supported by a wide variety of volunteers, with professional support, include:

- Changing mowing regimes on local verges to encourage more plant diversity.
- Re-wilding parts of Recreation Grounds, by changing their cutting regimes.
- Encouraging residents to include their gardens in projects to increase pollinators.
- Identifying a site for an otter holt on the Welland.
- Creating new ponds.
- Working with local schools to plant and maintain trees and bug habitats.
- Planting native hedges and trees at existing nature reserves.
- Putting up bird and bat boxes and carrying out bat surveys.
- Building log piles and dead hedges.
- Engaging with residents to encourage action and provide educational information.

This plan will not only help nature, but also benefit

the people of Peterborough by giving them access to green open spaces, hands on experience of working with nature, the sounds and silences of the natural world and helping restore balance in our lives after a difficult year.

Working with local landowners and tenant farmers through the emerging ELMS structures and subsidies, the opportunity exists to expand and create a large nature rich landscape, that will restore many of the features of

the old river Welland and its confluence with the Maxey Cut, South Drain and Folly River, whilst maintaining and improving its resilience to climate change and the ever increasing extremes of weather. Both flooding and extreme heat are becoming increasing threats to the richness of this countryside.

This project aims to join a wider trail across the John Clare Countryside area that starts at Stamford and follows one of the multiple courses of the Welland to Market Deeping. Our addition, in this area, would be to include the development of a Werrington to the Welland John Clare trail, both for walking and cycling, connecting the urban areas of



©Tracey Hipson

Fenland

Alan James

Whilst we continued to monitor and respond to planning applications in the District and provide advice to residents and members, climate change remains our greatest concern in respect of Fenland.

The Environment Agency continues its programme of mitigation steps with bank-raising and installation of a new flood barrier (see picture) on the A1101 Welney Wash Road to prevent water spilling from the Ouse Washes flood storage reservoir into the village.



©The Environment Agency

We continue to monitor IPCC announcements and it is concerning that their 2021 findings say 1.5°C warming will be reached or exceeded in the early 2030s. If the temperature continues to rise above 1.5°C the consequent sea level rise will create a serious risk to much of Fenland and significant parts of other districts. The IPCC's assessment of the evidence puts climate sensitivity at likely between 2.5°C and 4°C, with low-likelihood possibilities of less than 2°C or more than 5°C. We are therefore very concerned that the NPPF is continuing to force councils to build in areas of future high risk of flooding, some already below sea level.

As we said last year, the risks arising from continuing climate change are increased by the additional carbon emissions created by new roads and construction, such as the Ox-Cam Arc and developments imposed by the NPPF. In addition to carbon emissions they are the source of increased run-off from the additional hard surfaces they create and this run-off adds to peak flood risk.

We continue to oppose the proposed waste incinerator near a school in Wisbech. We continue to support the local Wiswin campaign group.

<https://wiswin.org.uk/>

This National Infrastructure application, so routed in order to avoid local authority and local residents'

close examination, has now been deferred again by the applicant, MWV. The Planning Inspectorate are waiting for MW to complete final consultee contacts.

The local MP, Steve Barclay, Norfolk County Council, Fenland District Council and seven parish councils have expressed clear opposition to the application. Cambridgeshire County Council is in a difficult position because they are the planning authority for another incinerator application and must not appear pre-determined or biased.

However, the MWV application is not compliant with the County Council Minerals and Wastes Plan which does not include any new waste incinerator site and which accepts the government target of waste authority self reliance, meaning there shall be no net import or export of waste into or from the county.

In parallel, we have continued to promote investment in relatively new processes which recycle plastic waste. We are hoping this issue will be raised via a question in the House of Lords soon.

Last year, we requested that Fenland District Council remove the proposal for the development of Manor Park, Chatteris, 'aka' Wenny Meadow, as a site for up to 90 homes, from the Local Plan during its review. Fenland District Council's cabinet has now approved the new draft Local Plan with Wenny Meadow removed from the strategic allocation for housing. However, the Council has not yet designated the whole site as a Local Green Space and campaigning for such designation continues. Voters in a parish poll have shown overwhelming support, 91.8%, for designation.

In 2021, we objected to an application to build sixteen houses in a green space bordering the Doddington Conservation Area which would have a negative effect upon the historic setting of the Grade II listed Doddington windmill. The application was withdrawn.

Residents of Tydd St Giles village and holiday park, requested our assistance with a proposal to build an additional 51 leisure holiday homes which would have significant effects on the village, residents of the existing holiday homes and, most importantly, on the flora and fauna of the existing green space which is also used as a recreation area by residents. We have objected and asked Fenland District Council to consider designation of this area as Local Green Space.

We are concerned by the proposal by Anglian Water and their now 'independent' campaigning body, Water Resources East, to site two new reservoirs in the Fens in order to supply further

continued on page 10 ►

East Cambridgeshire

Alan James

Whilst we continue to monitor and respond to planning applications in the district and provide advice to residents and members, the biggest issue facing East Cambridgeshire continues to be climate change.

As we have reported before and for Fenland, the steadily increasing rate of sea level rise as a consequence of climate change means increased flood risk to large parts of East Cambs. and the increased risk that the Isle of Ely will become an island again within current lifetimes.

However, there is another issue arising from climate change and that is lack of water. Unlike winter 2020/21 when local Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) started pumping 24/7 for several months due to the heavy and prolonged rainfall, winter 2021/22 proved to be very dry. That dryness has continued through Spring and early Summer. So, the concern now is will there be enough water for crop irrigation? The IDBs have always had to perform this balancing act and it is our view that they should have increased legal powers to assist them in controlling negative effects resulting from development and other activities.

We continue to be very concerned by East Cambridgeshire District Council's perceived misuse of the Rural Exception site rules and its branding of developments containing a majority of open-market housing as Community Land Trusts (CLT) and 'community-led developments'. We are not aware of any other planning authority that is behaving in this manner and delivering no greater percentage of affordable housing than that required of any fully commercial development under current council policies.

Kennett, where the council gave itself planning permission for a 500-home CLT, despite objections from every local parish council, many residents and many organisations including ourselves, remains the most blatant example. We have also objected to a similar application in Wilburton where a referendum declared a majority against the proposed development and where there has been a formal vote of no confidence in the parish council, both of which are being studiously ignored.

Meanwhile, East Cambs. Trading Company Ltd was unable to pay back its loan from the District Council which promptly provided another loan to pay back the first, thus extending the period of risk to council taxpayers.

We objected to an application made in 2020 for a retirement care village to be built on an area of the Cambridge Green Belt in Bottisham. This application

was refused by the local planning authority in 2021 and the refusal was upheld on appeal in April 2022. This was the second time that development of this site has been refused on appeal.

In our response to the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) Consultation – Round 2 Part 2 – Ely North, we again wrote in support of plans to complete the upgrade of the east-west freight rail route between Felixstowe and Nuneaton. This is a very complex area of multiple rail junctions, road crossings and passenger crossings and necessitated a complex response in which we requested careful consideration of the pedestrian safety issues, especially those affecting child safety.

We have continued to work with Suffolk Preservation Society and the local campaign group in opposing Sunnica, the largest solar park in the UK, on good farmland crossing the county border. The Sunnica site is a National Infrastructure application. The application has now been

submitted. We are very concerned not only by the loss of farmland but also by the risk of fire and explosion arising from the massive battery storage installation whose size far outweighs the needs of the solar installation because it is designed to facilitate energy trading. We have continued our correspondence with the local MPs who were referred to ourselves and SPS by the national CPRE.

We maintained our objection to a speculative application on the hillside between Haddenham and Wilburton for 70 dwellings. Permission was refused and this is now the subject of appeal.

We worked with the local HCV Group and agreed with Haddenham Level Drainage Commissioners that proposed gravel extraction close to the river on Haddenham Fen disguised as an agricultural reservoir, should be refused. Unfortunately, the County Council Planning Committee gave permission for this development and massive earthworks and other activities have started and have already ruined the view across this unspoiled fen landscape from the Hillrow Causeway towards Sutton.

We were asked by villagers of Pymoor to object to a licensing application which would enable festivals to be held in their village. This was an unusual request but on examination it was clear that the location proposed with poor access, no public transport in a wide area of drained agricultural land would pose a risk to public safety as well as a 24-

... safe, in close proximity to the town where adults and children can appreciate nature and, in particular, the mature hedgerows...

continued on page 11 ►

Huntingdonshire

Gareth Ridewood

Whilst we monitored and responded to planning applications in the Huntingdonshire District and provided advice to residents and members, we campaigned against proposals by London Luton Airport and NATS to impose a new aeroplane holding stack over large parts of Huntingdonshire.

We voiced our concerns at the CAA public evidence session where we called for the proposals to be withdrawn and are very concerned about the potential impacts including loss of tranquillity and noise pollution, impact on climate change and air pollution. We believed these proposals to be premature whilst a wider review of airspace in Southern England is undertaken as part of a government Airspace Modernisation Strategy which could mean further changes to the flight path and hold. This and wider European aviation policy demonstrate that new technology would allow stacking of aircraft to be abandoned through better queue management, delay absorption and higher linear holds - so we saw no need for this out dated 'racetrack' hold stacking to blight our area.

Unfortunately, the proposals were agreed and implemented in February 2022 by the CAA, NATS and Luton Airport. The holding stack operation is now in a post implementation review and data collection stage until the end of May 2023. Already we have received numerous concerns from across the hold and flightpath areas of increased noise and low altitude of aircraft approaching Luton airport causing a blight to local residents. We encourage residents who are concerned to report these



©Gareth Ridewood

incidents to the CAA and Luton Airport. Details on how to make a report can be found on our local CPRE Cambridgeshire website.

We also provided evidence and spoke at the National Infrastructure examination into the proposed A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Road Improvement scheme. We voiced a number of concerns surrounding the scheme. It is now with the Secretary of State for consideration.

We have objected strongly to the medical waste and plastics incinerator proposed to be built on the old mushroom compost site very close to the dangerous road junction on St Ives Road, Somersham. A key objection is the effect that siting of the chimney and its smoke plume on the ridge above the Great Ouse Valley will have on a wide area of unspoilt landscape. We are concerned about the effects on climate change of burning plastics instead of recycling them and the effects on health of chemical and fine particulate emissions.

We are monitoring several large solar farm proposals currently being planned across Huntingdonshire and have concerns at the impact due to their scale and location. We have called for more solar retrofitting of homes and business premises, particularly warehouses, and for better renewable energy incorporation into new housing and commercial developments in the area from day one. CPRE and the Building Research Institute developed appropriate standards for solar panel fitting on buildings and car parks back in 2014-2016. It is encouraging that Cambridgeshire County Council is currently fitting solar panel covering to the St Ives guided bus car park.

Media Activity

Ali Sargent

The last 12 months have been busy, with a great deal of focus on the OxCam Arc. Several press releases have gone out ranging from:

- A welcome for plans to abandon the expressway back in March.
- An appeal to as many people as possible to join the public consultation despite concern over 'leading' questions.
- A report on the results of the Stop the Arc (STARC) survey which showed 90% of respondents opposed government plans.

The Arc aside, our support for the Friends of the River Cam's opposition to developments which would damage the river received good coverage. A plea to give local parks and green spaces the same protection as national parks also gave us valuable airtime, as did this year's star count which showed Cambridgeshire County Council's replacement of orange sodium lights with LED lights has given a welcome boost to our dark skies. We also ran a release on the role of the rural economy as we head toward post-Covid economic recovery.

Cambridge & South Cambridgeshire _____ Jane Williams

I am sitting in the shade on the veranda of the summerhouse in my garden as I write. The sky is crystal blue not a cloud in the sky. My computer screen records 29°C. I can hear the scream of swifts and twitter of swallows and martins as they command the air. We are lucky to have bats feeding in the garden at twilight. Deer, naughty squirrels, hedgehogs and a variety of other creatures bless us with their presence throughout the year.

I live in Waterbeach, Cambridge on the edge of the Fens a few hundred metres from the River Cam.

I am very lucky to spend much time in the surrounding countryside with my dog called Molly (Mollydog) and my camera. I have an informal calendar of events throughout the year anticipating when I will see the first snowdrops, violets, catkins, hares, summer visitors, sound of the cuckoo, local swans presenting their cygnets to those who take the time to look. I could wax lyrical about the astounding beauty and joy that nature holds. Something indeed in my book that a monetary value cannot be placed upon it. It's love.

It is why I am proud to be a volunteer and trustee of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough branch of CPRE. The village/parish where I live has planning permission for a New Town of 11,000 dwellings. It's not just housing though. With a settlement comes much more building such as hotels, shops, businesses, primary and secondary schools, community buildings and other supporting services and infrastructure. This is how I came to be a member of CPRE and local activist.

South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City and the Cambridge Green Belt are already under threat of development in the current City and South Cambridgeshire, 2018, adopted Local Plans. Green Belt land can be put forward for development in Local Plans as happened in 2018. The same threat could happen again in the "emerging" Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan (combined City and South Cambridgeshire). As we know, Green Belt was designated to prevent urban sprawl. Indeed, it was Octavia Hill, that wonderful lady from Wisbech, when working with Ruskin to combat sprawl around London, who first coined the term 'Green Belt'.

In the case of the Cambridge Green Belt, it was designed to protect the uniqueness of the Cambridge City. South Cambridgeshire has a necklace of villages each with their own identity. Planning laws (National Planning Policy Framework) and pressure from developers and business are constantly putting this area of the country under continual threat from development.

For example, Anglian Water have received a £227m Housing Infrastructure Fund grant to relocate the Milton Sewage works (recently future proofed at a cost of millions of pounds to function until 2050) into the Cambridge Green Belt at Honey Hill. The land under threat is high quality arable land and is part of the National Trust's Wicken Fen Vision. The proposed works will be bigger than Wembley Stadium and situated between the villages of Fen Ditton and Horningsea. Anglian Water have admitted that there is no operational need to relocate the works. It is purely to provide housing on the Milton site of Cambridge North - Eastern Fringe as written in the Cambridge City 2018 adopted Local Plan. CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are strongly objecting to this application.

Other areas of the Cambridge Green Belt and South Cambridgeshire agricultural land are also under threat. Cambridgeshire County Council recently approved the Hauxton A10/M11 Junction 11 "travel hub". The 'South-West Travel Hub', as the Greater Cambridge Partnership are calling this large



car park in countryside, is planned to be built beside the A10 near to junction 11 of the M11 motorway. The scheme will include around 2,250 car parking spaces, around 80 Velobox cycle parking spaces, plus conventional cycle parking. It will provide a new long-distance coach hub with public transport routes to Cambridge and the Biomedical Campus.

Plans for this are now well advanced despite considerable local opposition, which has raised concerns principally over congestion, air pollution arising from the extra traffic anticipated and the pressure it will create for further linear

continued next page ►

Cambridgeshire & South Cambridgeshire continued

development along the A10 to Hauxton and Harston. The decision has not been called in by the Secretary of State.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership (formed of selected Councillors from Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge County Council and representatives from business and Cambridge University) is funded by the City Deal agreement with the government which equates to £1bn in total, made up of £500m government grant to be match-funded by £500m. It is unclear how the £500m will be raised locally. The Greater Cambridge Partnership has many “live” transport projects that cut through the Cambridge Green Belt and food-producing greenfield land.

There are proposals for three segregated busways, Coton, CSET (Cambridge South-East) and Waterbeach. There are proposals for active travel called Greenways and further Park & Rides. When posing the question, “what business models are being employed to discern the number of people/vehicles/cyclists etc. that the schemes will serve?”, it is hard to gain an answer from the Greater Cambridge Partnership. The Greater Cambridge Partnership is currently £112m over committed in funding current projects. Website link for information:

<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/>

East Anglia is currently experiencing a situation of water stress as reported in May 2022:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1081521/East_Anglia_Water_Situation_Report_May_2022.pdf)

[uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1081521/East Anglia Water Situation Report May 2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1081521/East_Anglia_Water_Situation_Report_May_2022.pdf)

Predictions of sea level rise due to climate change put much of the Fens, from the Wash to Cambridge, under water as early as 2030:

<https://sealevel.climatecentral.org/maps/>

The River Cam is part of a network of chalk streams of global importance and is currently classed as having very low flow by the Environment Agency:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/weekly-rainfall-and-river-flow-reports-for-england>

A staggering 85% of the world's chalk streams are found in England. Chalk streams: “why England's rain forests are so rare and precious”

<https://theconversation.com/chalk-streams-why-englands-rainforests-are-so-rare-and-precious-172827>

It seems hard to imagine how the blind pursuit of economic growth can continue unless the matters of food security, provision of precious water supply, climate change and the protection of the natural world and communities can be sustainably resolved.

As I mentioned earlier, I am so proud to be part of CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and to be with people with a passion who are prepared to try to make a difference for now and for those to come.

Please do consider joining us. As the saying goes, “every little helps.” We do have fun too!!

Peterborough continued

Werrington to the south and Deeping to the north of the river. This could introduce at least 8,000 more local households to the joy of the natural world.

Our part of the project has two aims.

Firstly, to create and promote a 3 mile off-road trail across the flatlands, where John Clare and his family lived from 1832. The ‘**Werrington to the Welland John Clare Trail**’, would use existing public access footpaths linking North Werrington through the parishes of Glinton, Peakirk, Northborough and across the Welland, via our new footbridge, into Deeping St James. Another existing 3-mile public footpath along the south bank of the Welland from the bridge site, would link Deeping Gate into this trail.

Secondly, to create six new areas of managed wetland below the 5m contour in our Flood Zone 3 High Risk areas, adjacent to the trail route. Our area has historically been dominated by water and its management from Roman times, from the digging of

the Carr Dyke to the widening and deepening of the Maxey Cut in the 1950s. Our aim is to create a sympathetic, landscape scale response to the problem, as old as the Fens themselves, of managing the water in this low-lying area.

Fenland continued

development of Cambridge. Given the level of flood risk to the Fens from rising sea levels, this seems a somewhat impractical idea. During an interview with the then CEO of Water Resources East organised by Friends of the Cam, he was unable to defend against our view when asked about the risk to these reservoirs from sea level rise.

Fenland, indeed the Fens as a whole, is one of the most productive crop-growing areas of the United Kingdom. Given the risks to food imports arising from climate change and now from the Ukraine war, it is of national importance that we do all that we can to ensure the Fens can continue to be productive.

Financial Report for the year from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

Nicholas de Chenu

	For the year ending 31st march 2021 £	For the year ending 31st march 2020 £
Receipts		
CPRE subscriptions received	8,961	8,896
Donations received	534	394
Interest received	21	99
Lottery receipts	173	181
Total receipts for year	9,689	9,570
Payments		
Charitable activities	8	12,417
Governance	365	940
Total payments for the year	8,410	13,087
Surplus (deficit) of receipts over expenditure	1,279	3,517
Balance of Cash Reserves at the beginning of the year	27,191	30,708
Balance of Cash Reserves at the end of the year	28,470	27,191

The charity does not have any funds which are of a restricted nature.

During the 12 months to 31st March 2021 the charity received a steady flow of income from members' subscriptions of £8,961 (2020 £8,896), resulting in a Total Income of £9,689 (2020 £9,570).

Total payments for the 12 months to 31st March 2021 were £8,410 (13,087), this was lower than the

comparative year due to the resignation of our only employee and the expenditure of £1,260 on website development in the earlier period.

The Cash Reserves on 31st March 2020 were £27,191 this increased by £1,279 by 31st March 2021 to £28,470.

The as yet unaudited Reserves on 31st March 2022 were £28,593 an increase of £161.

East Cambridgeshire continued

hour nuisance to residents, so an objection has been lodged.

We were asked by Soham residents to consider a hybrid planning application consisting of full planning permission for the demolition of 81 Brook Street and the provision of a new site and replacement bungalow along with outline planning permission for the construction of up to 80 new homes on East Fen Common. East Fen Common is a well-used local green space which is bisected by Soham Lode. It is somewhere safe, in close proximity to the town where adults and children can appreciate nature and, in particular, the mature hedgerows on the site. Because of the presence of Soham Lode, it also unusually rich in all kinds of wildlife. We have raised several issues and currently this application remains under consideration.

We remain concerned that additional funding for the

planning of an upgrade to the A10 between Cambridge and Ely has been confirmed and that if this upgrade proceeds it will give rise to further development pressures on the Isle of Ely and create major additional carbon emissions. We question the need for any new road building given the significantly changed work patterns following the pandemic with full home-working, hybrid working and shortened working weeks all reducing commuting and peak traffic flows.

We need additional resources in East Cambridgeshire to enable us to monitor and respond fully to all of the inappropriate planning applications that are arising in the district and it is a great concern that we are not able to help all communities and residents that need our assistance and at times are not even aware of such need until it is too late.

Social Media

We have made significant improvements to our social media activities over the last twelve months, although we appreciate we still have some way to go with Facebook, in particular.

Website

We are very pleased that we now have a much more functional, user-friendly and visually attractive website <http://www.cprecambs.org.uk/> designed for us by www.jswebservices.com, with material collated by Tracey Hipson, which went live in April. It presents a clear visual and written statement of who we are, what our mission is, and what we are doing.

News items are refreshed on an as-needed basis and we add content at least weekly, for example, to the Rural Economy, Gallery, and Events sections, and blogs from Lizzie Bannister. Refreshing content is essential because search engines base a website's search rankings on volume of new content; repeat visitors like to see new content; and other sites are more likely to link to ours if it contains new content ("link bait").

The Twitter feed appears on the Home-page, so even non-Twitter users can now see our Tweet activity simply by logging in to the website.

The Resources/Organisations section lists organisations that share many of our objectives and aspirations for a greener, cleaner, more environmentally-friendly planet that values nature. We invite others not listed to contact us for a free listing.

The Rural Economy/Rural Businesses and Rural Economy/Local Foods sections list local businesses (such as rural suppliers, arts centres, agricultural machinery, blacksmiths), and food producers and retailers, respectively, and provide free listings in line with our core objective of supporting the rural economy.

Please have a look at the website and give us your comments; we always welcome constructive suggestions on how we can improve.

Twitter

Twitter is our primary social media platform in terms of activity, and we are using it professionally and successfully. We post daily from a combination of the local, national and international media - and ensure our tweets have topic interest, visual impact, and often calls for action. We retweet often, as appropriate.

We try to steer clear of "controversial" subjects and we do not express any party-political views, but that is often a matter of judgement. It has been very

pleasing to see cross-political participation in many of the campaigns in which we have, and continue to, participate, such as the Ox-Cam Arc, Incinerators, East-West Rail, sewage, preservation of chalk streams, flooding and development-related drinking-water shortages. We have had very successful Twitter engagements with Feargal Sharkey on the water issues which have followed on from his talk for Friends of the Cam.

The table opposite analyses our Twitter activity and performance by quarter over the last year.

We have intentionally reduced the amount of tweeting we do over the last six months, but to compensate we have been adding a number of topic relevant # (hashtags) in tweets (used by people to find content and accounts of interest), and photographs ("clickbait") to attract more views. Reducing tweets has not impacted the number of new followers, which has remained steady throughout the year. We have added 239 new followers over the year and the total stands at 1,080. We are extremely "picky" about followers and

...very pleasing to see cross-party political participation in many of the campaigns in which we have, and continue to, participate...

do not hesitate to remove suspicious-looking followers e.g. those that have never tweeted, or have few tweets, have no or few followers, but follow a large number of accounts. Our philosophy is definitely quality over quantity.

Our Profile Visits have increased dramatically in the last quarter to

14,595. These are other unique Twitter users (not our own Administrators/Tweeters) clicking on one of our tweets and then on our Twitter profile, and are generally indicative of an increase in the popularity of our profile. This should help to increase our followers in the coming months if it is sustained.

Impressions (how many times a tweet has been seen) dipped when tweet volumes reduced, but are rising. Engagements, too, are rising. These include any kind of interaction someone has with a tweet e.g. retweeting it, marking it as a favourite, replying to it, clicking on a link it contains (such as for an event or an article), or mentioning an account in a tweet. Link Clicks, Retweets and Likes are important indicators of successful engagements, and ours are all rising. Replies have increased dramatically as we are engaging more with certain users on specific topics.

Finally, we have listed Top Tweets, those which each received over 1,000 Impressions. Tracking and analysing these is a useful way of monitoring which subjects are grabbing the attention of our followers and other Twitter users who saw our page. ►

Annual Overview of Twitter Performance by Quarter

1 August 2021 - 26 July 2022

	1 Aug - 30 Oct 2021 (91 days)	1 Nov 2021 - 30 Jan 2022 (91 days)	1 Feb 3 - May 2022 (92 days)	4 May - 26 July 2022 (84 days)
Quarterly tweets	486	943	350	270
New Followers (total 239)	61	47	64	67
Profile visits (total 47,259)	11,234	9,455	11,975	14,595
Impressions per Quarter	120.9K	127.5K	63.6K	84.4K
Impressions per Day	1.3K	1.4K	691	1.0K
Engagement Rate	3.2%	3.2%	4.1%	3.9%
Clicks on Links in Tweets	924	933	471	692
Average Clicks per Day	10	10	5	8
Retweets without Comments	578	483	471	486
Average Retweets without Comments per Day	6	5	5	6
Likes	873	691	663	675
Average Likes per Day	10	8	7	8
Replies	108	112	94	164
Average Replies per Day	1	1	1	2
Subjects of Top Tweets (Impressions over 1,000)	Illustrator @bernoid. Bat Workshop. @no_expressway. Ox-Cam Arc. #SewageSaturday. @TransportActio2. @Kings_College lawn. Cambridge plans. Cambridge housing need. Tree planting. @FewsLane public access system thanks. Harm by @Airnb. Envair Incinerator. EWR & @ab4scambs. Useless GCP strategy.	@JDjanogly vote for sewage. Ouse banks collapse due to A14. @TreesACrowdpod. Cynical consultation timings. Protected species. #FenScapers & #FenFolksFriday. Cambs worst for potholes. Octavia Hill. Special roof tile for bats.	No-one buys off CPRE Feargal. Hoverflies. Refurbishing homes. Help farmers/Stop reliance on imported food.	#Bretton oak felling (3 tweets). Oxford river pollution. Romsey Labour Club conversion to flats? "Restoration" of Cam food.

Facebook

We have not been very active on Facebook due to access issues, but are considering archiving the site and starting afresh.

Facebook is no longer just a means of connecting with friends and family; it has become a vital free marketing tool. It is by far the most-used social media channel globally with 2.93 billion monthly active users (Q2 2022 figures), and we are missing out on potential new members by not using it.

By sharing posts between Twitter and Facebook we can enhance our social media profile with little additional cost in terms of time spent, but we do need to commit to regular posting of high-quality and compelling content that interests our target audience, as well as re-posting relevant content from other Facebook users ("curated posts").

continued overleaf

Social Media continued

As important as content, will be social engagement (the “chat”), which will help to humanise us and build a dialogue with our followers, such as:

- Responding to questions.
- Answering direct messages.
- Responding to comments and posts tagging us.
- Looking for relevant hashtags to find new conversations to join.
- Reaching out to supporters individually to show the “personality” of CPRE Cambs.

If we can manage to achieve the combined content and engagement objectives, we should see increased branch membership from Facebook due to the number of opportunities to explain what we do, and to highlight what help we need.

Other Channels

Although we fully appreciate their immense value in social media campaigns, we have no plans to engage with other channels such as YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and TikTok. We simply do not have the resources.

About CPRE

We campaign for a beautiful and living countryside. We work to influence how we plan our towns and cities to make them better places to live and work, to ensure the countryside is protected for all to enjoy for now and future generations.

Our Patron is Her Majesty the Queen. Our President is Emma Bridgewater.

Nationally, we have around 60,000 members and a branch in every county. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. CPRE is a Registered Charity (No. 1089685).

Please note the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individual contributors, or the editor, and do not necessarily represent the views of the branch or the national charity.

CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Branch

President

Christopher Vane Percy

Branch Officers

Chairman: Alan James

Vice-Chairman: Lawrence Wragg

Treasurer: Nick de Chenu

Committee Members

Gareth Ridewood

Jane Williams

Wendy Oldfield

Lizzie Bannister

Alison Sargent

Branch Administrator

Jo McGowan

T: 01480 396698

E: office@cprecambs.org.uk

Press Officer

Alison Sargent

T: 07776 255193

E: Ali.sargent01@outlook.com

District Contacts and Specialists

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

Jane Williams

East Cambridgeshire and Fenland

Alan James

Peterborough

Sally Jackson

Huntingdonshire

Gareth Ridewood

General Planning issues

Branch office

Membership Champion

Wendy Oldfield

Keeping in Touch

CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are happy to help you. As well as this report and our printed newsletter, there are lots of ways to keep in touch with us. Please contact our office: Tel: 01480 396698.

If you have an email address, sign up for our occasional e-bulletin: office@cprecambs.org.uk

Our website is frequently updated with both local and national news and issues. Have a look and tell us what you think: www.cprecambs.org.uk.

Write:

CPRE, The Town Hall, Market Hill, St Ives, Cambs PE27 5AL



Follow us on Twitter: [@CPRECambs](https://twitter.com/CPRECambs).



Facebook: CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.



Picture credits:

Top: Fenland farming landscape © Lizzie Bannister

Middle: West Huntingdonshire © Gareth Ridewood

Bottom: Konik ponies. ©John Hagger

<https://bystargooseandhanglands.blogspot.com/>