



Haddon Solar Farm: No Means No!

But large scale solar farms are still a threat.

In August 2022 we objected to a proposal to site a solar energy farm in Haddon, Huntingdonshire. We were pleased when an initial decision to refuse the application was made in December 2023. However, following changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the Development Management Committee (DMC) was asked to decide whether the previous resolution to reject should remain. The original decision to reject the application was upheld – but as we suspected the decision was appealed. Finally, in November 2024 the appeal made by Wessex Solar Energy Ltd against Huntingdonshire District Council's decision was dismissed by the Inspector. You can read the decision notice at <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/cpre-news/2024/11/12/haddon-solar-farm-its-a-no/>.

However, the battle against huge and inappropriate solar energy farms is not yet won, and we are monitoring and commenting on proposals for solar farms that will have a massive impact on our county. The problems



Right to Roam © Gareth Ridewood

associated with these developments cannot be overstated: food security and the impact on farming, especially in a region that has a high proportion of good quality agricultural land; the impact on the local landscape – including the cumulative impact; questions regarding the safety of battery storage; concerns about the recyclability of the solar panels; the long-term impact on the land. These and other concerns are explored more fully in The Problem with Solar Farms – you can read it here <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/downloads/solar-farms.pdf>.

We were bitterly disappointed with the decision made by Ed Milliband, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, to approve Sunnica Ltd's proposal to site a solar energy farm straddling East Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk – despite the

expert Examining Authority recommending that it should NOT be granted as a result of its many negative impacts. We support the Say No to Sunnica action group, which is fundraising to launch a Judicial Review to overturn the decision. Read more at

<https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/cpre-news/2024/08/21/cpre-cambs-peterborough-supports-say-no-to-sunnica-campaign/>.

CPRE Norfolk has started a petition to “Ban large solar schemes on farmland/open countryside and promote solar on roofs”. To sign the petition, go to <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/703284>

Hedgerows and Nesting Birds

We launched our Beginners Guide to Hedgerows in the spring/summer 2024 edition of our News Update (you can read it here <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/downloads/A-beginners-guide-to-hedgerows.pdf>). At this time of year, many people are concerned about the legalities of hedge-cutting and the impact on nesting birds. Protect the Wild has a very useful article about this on their website - <https://protectthewild.org.uk/campaign/illegal-to-cut-a-hedge-in-spring-yes-and-no/>.

2024 Annual General Meeting

Our 2024 AGM – our first in-person for five years – was held on 14th November at St Ives Corn Exchange. We had a good turn-out of members and visitors alike, and it was good to see a mixture of old and new faces! We were sorry to say goodbye to Alan James (Chair), Nick de Chenu (Treasurer), who stood down at the end of their terms of office, and Jane Williams (Vice-Chair), who stood down from the committee, although we are pleased to report that Alan and Jane will continue to volunteer for the branch. We were delighted to welcome our new Treasurer, Sue Duma, who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the team.



Our guest speaker was local farmer and Hunts Post columnist Anne-Marie Hamilton (pictured), whose talk "Don't Explain, Don't Complain" was about the challenges farmers are facing. An interesting discussion followed! We also held a very successful raffle with prizes donated by local businesses and individuals – our thanks to them.

The "Clusters" Myth

We're increasingly hearing about the "Cambridge Cluster" and the supposed benefits this will bring – and with it, a swathe of development with all the problems that will bring to our already overloaded infrastructure, and the impact on water supply, streams and rivers in the most water-stressed part of the country.

The 'cluster' effect claimed for Cambridge is economically and scientifically uncompetitive in the global life science and IT arenas. Clusters were a 1960's idea, brought in to enable ease of meeting and discussion when there was no telephone conferencing and just voice phones and teletext communications. International meetings would be held at airports and clustering enabled local interaction and conversation. Today, we have the internet. Additionally, the largest life science 'cluster' is now the Research Triangle Area covering 14 counties of North Carolina, USA - an area not much smaller than England. In an equivalent area the UK has over thirty world class universities, all engaged in various aspects of life science, IT and other science research and development. In global terms it is the UK that should be regarded as a research cluster, not a single entity such as Cambridge. Take just three examples; the discovery of a treatment for a strain of motor neurone disease by Sheffield; the Biosphere and Centre for Life in Newcastle and the Egenis Centre for the Study of Life Sciences in Exeter. Co-operation across these and other centres of excellence in the UK would deliver far greater and better distributed economic and scientific returns than the overheating of Cambridge.

We know, too, that there are large towns and cities up and down England in need of regeneration. Cities across the Midlands and the north have good universities, attractive surrounding countryside and plenty of underused brownfield sites, as well as empty homes, in need of regeneration. Indeed, CPRE's 2022 State of Brownfield report looked at local councils' registers of brownfield land and found that, nationally, over 1.2 million homes could be built on 23,000 sites covering more than 27,000 hectares of previously developed land.

We consider that the 'growth' and 'clustering' projections claimed for Cambridge are unsustainable and not in the best national interest. Development of the entire UK as a science cluster would be more competitive on a global scale.

Busways – Who Benefits?

We've objected in the strongest possible terms to two Busway applications in recent months. The first is an application by the unelected Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), to build an off-road busway between Cambourne and Cambridge. The second is an application by Cambridge County Council (CCC) and GCP to build an off-road busway between a new travel hub near the A11 to A1307 and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

Although we recognise that improving public transport is an absolute national priority, we consider that scarce national funds must be spent most wisely and cost-effectively with minimal ecological and climate impact – and these proposals do not meet those criteria.

Our objections included:

- Our concern that the reason for these applications is not better public transport, but is purely financial, with the core benefit being Land Value Uplift.
- The 'growth' and 'clustering' projections claimed for Cambridge, which underpin these proposals, are unsustainable and not in the best national interest – see "The Clusters Myth", above.
- The effects on landscape and ecology – we're particularly concerned by the effect of the Cambridge to Cambourne busway upon the 100-year-old Traditional Orchard at Coton. Equally, the landscape of the Cam Valley will be affected by the second application. Both sites have high levels of biodiversity supporting many rare species of flora and fauna.
- We believe that there is a growing body of evidence that segregated busways are not an effective means of cost-effective, flexible, public transport provision.
- We understand that CAPCA is the authority for planning bus service provision in the county and that any proposal for bus service provision along this corridor should be planned and managed by CAPCA.

Bluebell Wood, Brampton, Cambridgeshire



- We believe that the county needs and deserves an Integrated Approach to public transport planning, not the piecemeal approach that these proposals represent.
- We're concerned that if these busways are built it will be council tax-payers that will be left to pick up the ongoing high maintenance bills, just as they have been with the existing busway.
- Finally, but not least, we are very concerned by the potential effect on greenhouse gas emissions by these major construction projects.

New Year Fundraising Appeal

Thank you so much to all those who donated to our recent fundraising appeal – and if you'd like to donate, there's still time!

We can only respond to the threats to our Cambridgeshire and Peterborough countryside with the support of our members. We're a small, local charity and we rely entirely on the support of our members to fund our hardworking team. We use all of our limited resources to fight for our countryside. By donating directly to us we are able to use 100% of your donation to support our work.

To donate, please go to <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/donate-to-cpre.html>.

Everything's Coming Up Daffodils!

The Ouse Valley Way will be a little brighter following the planting of daffodil bulbs donated by CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Taylors Bulbs. Great Ouse Valley Trust volunteers planted the bulbs along part of the route in Godmanchester at Cow Lane on the national cycleway route 51; a great walk and cycle route for all in a beautiful location!



The Sunshine Bill Update

Thank you to everyone who contacted their MP to ask them to back the Sunshine Bill. The 'New Homes (Solar Generation) Bill' – also known as the Sunshine Bill – would require solar panels to be installed on all new homes.

The bill was debated on 17th January, with many MPs delivering impassioned speeches supporting solar panels on new homes. The second reading has been adjourned to 11 July 2025. You can find out more about this and what it means for the Bill at

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/sunshine-bill-debate-calling-for-solar-pv-on-new-homes-adjourned/>

Solar energy has the power to cut sky-high bills and tackle the cost-of-living crisis, while taking urgent action on the climate emergency – a win for people and nature.

Find out more about CPRE's Rooftop Solar campaign and how you can get involved here <https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/cpre-news/2023/05/30/cpre-rooftop-revolution-solar-energy-campaign/>

East West Rail (EWR) Petition



Bedford Station by M Richardson

There's still time to sign the petition asking that the EWR project be paused and re-evaluated. It's our view that the threat to farmland in particular and the environment in general far outweighs any benefits. We believe that the £8bn to be spent on this project would be better spent on other railway projects such as re-opening the lines to Wisbech and to Haverhill & Sudbury; extending the guided busway to Huntingdon - and hence Alconbury - and re-railing it; and completing the much needed track layout improvement required at Ely station to enable increased freight capacity from Felixstowe/Harwich to Nuneaton taking 1,000 lorries per day off the A14.

Read more and sign the petition go to

<https://www.cprecambs.org.uk/cpre-news/2024/12/17/petition-to-pause-and-review-east-west-rail/>



A big thank you to all our supporters who raise funds for us on 'easyfundraising'. If you're not signed up yet, please join today to raise donations – at no cost to yourself – for CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough every time you shop online. All the big names like John Lewis & Partners, Expedia, Argos, Just Eat and many more are ready to make a free donation at no extra cost to you. Please sign up today: <https://join.easyfundraising.org.uk/cprecambridgeshire>