



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Bedfordshire

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ISSUE NO 64

# Bedfordshire Matters

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Promoting and protecting the countryside  
and green spaces of Bedfordshire



# Chair's column

Gerry Sansom



As we write this newsletter yet another stark warning regarding climate change is published, this time in the journal *Bioscience* following the collaboration of dozens of scientists. There is no time to lose, the scientists say: *"The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected. It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity."*<sup>1</sup> The statement is endorsed by a further 11,000 scientists from 153 nations.

In Bedfordshire each of our local authorities; Luton Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council have recognised and signed up to the climate change Emergency.

At the moment though, it's all fine words and no action – at the same time as making the commitment to recognise that fundamental change is needed, they carry on with business as usual.

**LBC** - is consulting on plans to double the size of their airport, increasing flight movements to 240,000 per year.

**CBC** - is planning to build a new A6-M1 Link Road which will carve through the hugely important Chilterns AONB in Bedfordshire and massively impact two precious ancient woodlands.

**BBC** - has announced plans to dual the Bedford Western Bypass without even considering sustainable alternatives – the new road will get jammed-up just as quickly as the current one – more road building is not the answer. (See *Challenging the Road Building Consensus* in the resources section of our website)

We can now see and feel the predicted results of climate change in our own environment with higher temperatures and unusual weather conditions. This summer I have noticed the catastrophe of biodiversity loss with a reduction in bird populations in my part of Bedfordshire – what has happened to the swallows, the swifts and house martins that we normally see in the summer? There were noticeably far fewer than in previous summers –perhaps due the reduction in insect populations on which they feed.

On another issue, in July CPRE Bedfordshire attended the Consultation Launch of England's Economic Heartland's new Outline Transport Strategy – more details on the strategy can be found on page 12. The Consultation ended on the 31st October and CPRE county charities across the Oxford - Cambridge Arc provided the consultation with a joint response.

It was very interesting to note the organisations that joined the Mayor of Bedford, Dave Hodgson, on the stage to launch the strategy and also push the "benefits" of the Oxford-Cambridge growth Arc with the associated development of a mega-housing conurbation. Among them was a company called CBRE (not to be confused with our own organisation). This huge American owned global real estate company has now emerged from the shadows as one of the lead organisations pushing these environmentally unsustainable growth objectives for the benefit of its developer clients. More on CBRE can be found on page 14.



## 2020 Fighting Fund

We have a clear vision for a thriving and beautiful countryside for everyone. We have launched the 2020 Fighting Fund so that together we can secure a better future for our precious Bedfordshire countryside. To make a donation please go to [www.cprebeds.org.uk](http://www.cprebeds.org.uk) or call 01234 880624.

<sup>1</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article/doi/10.1093/biosci/biz088/5610806>

## “Fleecehold” comes to Bedford Borough for new homeowners

At a recent meeting between local Town & Parish Councils and Bedford Borough Council (BBC), concern was expressed about recent changes to BBC policy regarding publicly accessible open green space in and around new housing developments and the way in which they are managed over the long term.

It seems that, in order to appease developers, BBC policy regarding the maintenance of things like hedgerows surrounding developments, small green spaces, and green areas around footways and in some cases children’s play areas etc, has changed very significantly.

In the past developers who, by obtaining planning permission had made huge financial gains, were asked to transfer the ownership of these green areas to the local Town or Parish Council together with a substantial sum of money to cover the estimated maintenance of them over an agreed period of say, 10 years. Depending on the size of the development this could be tens of thousands of pounds.

The Town & Parish Councils would then take on responsibility for all future maintenance of the green spaces and all costs beyond the 10-year period.

Town & Parish Councils cover their maintenance costs through their precept which is included as part of the council tax charged to all homeowners in their area. If homeowners are not happy with the charges or have issues with the maintenance, then they have the option to complain to their council.

Now it seems that BBC are allowing developers and landowners to hold on to the ownership of these green spaces



and be responsible for the long term maintenance.

Developers are now obliging new homeowners in developments across the Borough to enter into agreements with them for the maintenance of the green spaces.

CPRE Bedfordshire understand that these agreements oblige homeowners to pay annual fees which can be more than double the amount that they would be charged if their local Town or PC were doing the same job.

In addition, whereas in the past, the cost of unpredictable damage e.g. wind damage to fences or insect blight which require the replacement of trees, small scale vandalism etc. would be spread across the community as a whole now, new home owners can be charged very large sums retrospectively for the total cost of any such damage.

Under this developer led system new homeowners have no democratic means of seeking redress if they are not happy with the service, only costly legal avenues are available.

Developers benefit hugely because they no longer have to pay the very large sums of upfront money to Town & Parish Councils. Quite the reverse, now they collect money from day one and often there is no limit to the annual

increases they can apply to the annual maintenance charge.

CPRE Bedfordshire estimate that for a very large site of 2,000 homes developers could be collecting around £300,000 per year (plus annual increases) for as long as the homes are there – for ever! Way beyond the actual cost of maintenance.

Even a small site of say 50 homes could be generating in excess of £7,500 per year. This means huge net profits for the developers over unlimited timescales.

To us this has all the makings of a scandal like that of leasehold which developers have been forced to abandon following a huge public backlash.

**CPRE Bedfordshire will be writing to BBC to ask why they have changed their policy to the detriment of new homeowners in the Borough and for full details of the number and location of the new housing developments impacted by the policy change.**

# Local Plan Update

## Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Local Plan 2030

The Public Hearing sessions of the Local Plan examination have now been completed and some major modifications to the local Plan have been submitted by the Inspectors to BBC.

These modifications have been made available to stakeholders for consultation and CPRE Bedfordshire has responded.

It is now even clearer that BBC are holding enormous contingencies within their Plan.

In our response to the consultation we pointed out that following the modifications the number of new dwellings held as contingency has now risen to 1,301 dwellings. This represents a massive and unjustifiable contingency of 41% of the total number of new dwellings required to be built which is now 3,165.

This is in addition to those new homes already being built or with planning permission but not yet started.

For this reason, we have made clear our view that the number of new dwellings allocated to the Key Rural Service Centres (Bromham, Clapham, Great Barford & Sharnbrook), currently 2,000 dwellings should be reduced by a total of around 1,000 units. Within this, 1,000 units, proportionately higher reductions should be allocated to the smaller villages of Sharnbrook and Great Barford.

We understand that BBC are expecting to receive a formal letter from the Inspectors containing their final views on the Local Plan during the first half of November as we go to print.

## Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Local Plan 2035

As reported in the summer edition of Bedfordshire Matters, during the Public Hearing sessions the Inspectors were critical of the evidence base used by CBC in the preparation of their Local Plan. It was no great surprise therefore that the Inspectors formal letter sent to the Council on the 30th September following the end of the Hearing Sessions was also highly critical of the Plan.

Of considerable concern to us was the fact that CBC refused to publish a copy of the letter on their website in contravention of the protocol established by the Inspectors. We were therefore obliged to issue Freedom of Information requests to obtain a copy of the letter which was eventually released on 14th October.

CPRE Bedfordshire will continue to act whenever necessary to protect the democratic rights of the residents of Central Bedfordshire.

The areas of the Local Plan that the Inspectors have criticised are precisely

those which CPRE Bedfordshire has highlighted from the very outset and include:

- Unsustainable development within the Greenbelt
- The A6-M1 Link Road that will slice through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Very large-scale housing developments proposed (new towns) without any detailed analysis of the impact on infrastructure or evidence of need
- A proposed review of the Local Plan which would have increased housing numbers by a further 20,000 homes

As we go to print, we await the final decision from the Inspectors as to whether the Local Plan can be modified to enable it to be approved or, if CBC will need to start again.

The Inspectors letter and CBC's response to it can be downloaded from the news section of our website.

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## The Scandal of Houghton Regis North (HRN1) – CPRE Bedfordshire will demand Public Inquiry

CPRE Bedfordshire remains extremely concerned about HRN1, the huge delays to building the 5,000 new homes that were given permission in 2014, the lack of a comprehensive Development Plan for the area, the deal that resulted in just 10% affordable homes on a number of homes 30% more than the town of Ampthill, the fact that developers may not have paid their £44m contribution towards the costs of the new A5 – M1 Link Road and the Woodside Link Road which cost the public purse £200m.

Once the election is out of the way, CPRE Bedfordshire will be writing to the new government demanding a full Public Inquiry.





## Renhold application

As we go to print, the largest application yet to try to take advantage of the government's completely incoherent transitional regulations and their badly constructed "Standard Method" for calculating housing need (see page 7), has just completed the public consultation phase.

The application is for 400 new homes and a new primary school on land off Hookhams Lane, Renhold.

The site was previously rejected by BBC in their site assessment for the Local Plan 2030 and the application is so large that it will make a complete mockery of BBC's Spatial Strategy and Housing Distribution Policy.

We very much hope that BBC will robustly stand up for its own Local Plan and take all measures including Judicial Review to protect it.

CPRE Bedfordshire has objected to the application.

## CPRE BEDFORDSHIRE'S GREEN CLEAN IN NUMBERS

14TH SEPTEMBER 2019 - HOUGHTON REGIS CHALK PIT

**865**

Plastic bottles

**886**

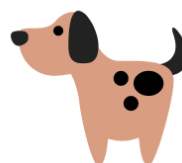
Drinks cans

**229**

Glass bottles

**27**

Cartons /  
Tetra-Pak



23 volunteers (plus Frank the dog) spent 3 hours litter picking.  
That's 69 hours of green cleaning!



16 bags of general litter



24 bags of bottles  
and cans

### OTHER ITEMS FOUND INCLUDED...



3 shopping  
trolleys



Fishing rod



Socks



Jeans



Sleeping bag



3 bike saddles



Woolly hat



Wellies

WHY NOT JOIN IN WITH OUR NEXT GREEN CLEAN EVENT?  
WATCH THIS SPACE FOR MORE DETAILS

# Natural connection

Speaking at the CPRE National Conference this year, Professor Miles Richardson from University of Derby's Nature Connectedness Research Group talked about the importance of nature to our wellbeing.

Miles explained that nature connectedness is a psychological construct that describes how close an individual's relationship with nature is, so how much they enjoy nature and its beauty, how important it is to them, whether they feel part of nature and if they treat nature with respect. A systematic review of 32 studies by the research group showed that nature connection related to feeling good and functioning well. As well as improving wellbeing, those who are highly connected to nature are more likely to be concerned about climate change and want to protect the natural environment.

Miles suggests that the climate and environment emergency shows that our relationship with the rest of nature is broken and that to fix it we must be more connected. However, to be truly connected to nature we need to engage with it on an emotional and sensory level. We also need to recognise that we are part of nature and not separate and this relationship can be developed by embracing the following pathways to connect with nature: -

**Contact** - Tuning in to nature through the senses.

**Emotion** - Feeling alive through the emotions nature brings.

**Beauty** - Noticing nature's beauty.

**Meaning** - Nature bringing meaning to our lives.

**Compassion** - Caring and taking action for nature.

Several environmental charities



including the National Trust and RSPB have introduced ways for visitors to improve their connections with nature by applying these pathways. CPRE is now considering how we might champion the benefits of the countryside for our wellbeing, as we strive to raise awareness of why it matters so much to our society and future.

In the meantime, here are some suggestions of things you could do now to develop your nature connectedness.

**Notice and actively engage** with nature by listening to birdsong or touching the bark of a tree.

**Engage emotionally with nature** by taking a moment to reflect on your natural surroundings.

**Take time to appreciate beauty** in nature or enjoy an amazing view and perhaps capture it in a photo.

**Explore how nature brings meaning to your life.** Notice the changing season and the meaning they have for you.

**Think what you can do for nature** – feed the birds, use eco-friendly products, join CPRE!

## Bedfordshire matters and you can help save the countryside from as little as £3 per month

Help protect the countryside by becoming a member of CPRE. We all need the countryside – whether it's for fresh air, delicious local produce, beautiful landscapes, or vibrant towns and villages – the countryside is invaluable. By joining CPRE, you are helping to ensure that a beautiful living countryside thrives for generations to come.

CPRE membership is from £3 per month, but giving at a higher level will help us do more to protect the countryside.

**Becoming a member is easy** - go to [www.cprebeds.org.uk](http://www.cprebeds.org.uk) to join online or download a membership form.



# Fears of development 'free for all' hitting hard in Bedford Borough

**CPRE Bedfordshire warned earlier this year that the transitional arrangements introduced to protect councils hit hardest by the new housing needs assessment formula, were seriously flawed and would result in a development free for all.**

The transitional arrangements mean that councils that submitted a new Local Plan by 31st January 2019 can rely on their currently calculated needs assessment for planning purposes, rather than be required to adhere to a higher level of assessed need based on the new formula. In Bedford Borough's case the new figure would represent a 33% increase in the number of new homes required in the Local Plan 2030. The serious flaw in the transitional arrangements is that until the new plan is adopted, authorities must use the level of assessed need based on the new formula in calculating its housing land supply until the new Local Plan is adopted.

In order for a planning authorities' policies to have legal effect, the council must maintain a supply of available housing land of at least 5 years. The introduction of a significantly higher figure for assessed need impacts negatively on the calculated figure for housing land supply. In Bedford's case, the new assessed housing needs figure led to a reduction in its housing land supply from 5.7 years to 3.8 years. As a result, until the new Local Plan is adopted and the housing land supply is restored, national planning regulations demand that Bedford Borough's planning policies be set aside in favour of any planning application which is seen to offer 'sustainable development.'



The impact of this perverse set of circumstances is already being felt with a number of planning applications having been approved which do not comply with Borough planning policies and in normal circumstances would be refused. This was particularly evident at the Borough's Planning Committee meeting of 28th October where applications for 51 homes in Sharnbrook and 46 homes in Willington were approved for this reason. In Wilstead and Wooton schemes for 65 and 81 homes respectively were deferred for one month for site visits. An earlier refusal of an application in Biddenham was successfully appealed by the developer where the inspector found in favour of the appellant despite the fact that the Borough's Local Plan is very far advanced and within weeks of the inspectors issuing their final report. The Borough have not taken the opportunity to take the decision to judicial review and we cannot understand why.

In the case of a current application for residential development of up to 90 dwellings at Harrold Lake, where developers are also attempting to exploit this loophole, CPRE Bedfordshire and local people lobbied Alistair Burt MP and secured his support to request that the

Secretary of State use his call in powers to oversee the decision making process for this application. As this application was not decided within the required time scale, the developer has lodged an appeal which is due to be heard in November.

As with some other parishes affected, Harrold is in the process of completing a Neighbourhood Plan. The effect of this application, if approved, would be to lay waste to all the hard work that residents have invested in developing their plan and deny them their opportunity to determine how development should take place in their community.

CPRE Bedfordshire will be supporting residents and making representations at the Appeal hearing. If the appeal proves to be successful, as was the case with the Biddenham application, we will be putting pressure on the Borough Council to stand up for its policies and for the democratic rights of local people by taking the case to Judicial Review. This may prove to be the only means available to attempt to redress the balance which all too often is tilted in favour of developers who pay scant regard to any consideration beyond their own interests.

## Warehousing – the environmental cost of the gig economy

**With Bedfordshire fast becoming the warehousing capital of this part of south east England, fear is growing about the environmental cost of policies designed to attract more and more massive warehousing along the principal highway network. The majority of the new warehousing is being built to support the growing “gig economy”.**

Local Plans of all local authorities focus on attracting the Strategic Warehousing Sector to our county saying that they offer additional employment opportunities.

However, the reality is that the majority of the new warehouses are being built on Greenfield sites and they are eating up huge areas of land, often farming land.

Warehousing is an extremely inefficient use of land. In general, they are single storey buildings which take up a considerable amount of space compared to the number of jobs generated.

The “Homes & Communities Agency, Employment Density Guide, 2015 shows that the amount of space per worker in an office development is typically 8-13 sq. m. per worker, compared to 36-47 sq. m in an industrial building and 70-95 sq. in a typical warehouse. So around 9 times as much space is required for each warehouse employee compared to an employee in an office environment.

Additionally the trend in warehousing is towards even higher levels of automation with a subsequently reduced need for labour. Therefore, warehouses are unlikely to deliver the number of employment opportunities predicted over the longer term and the majority of jobs created by the sector are often low skilled and low paid.

More warehousing also encourages more HGV traffic and their impact is felt right across the highway network, strategic, urban and rural with the accompanying increase in congestion and air pollution.





## Living Countryside Awards

We will shortly be announcing the categories for the 2020 CPRE Bedfordshire Living Countryside Awards. In the meantime, we caught up with some of the entrants in our 2018 Awards to find out what winning an award meant to them and what they have been doing since.



**Sharnbrook Castle Close Wildlife & Heritage Site** commissioned a totem pole carved with some of the invertebrates found on the site. It is about 10 foot high, carved in oak by two local wood carvers. They won a CPRE Mark in the Biodiversity & Landscape Improvement category. The judges were impressed by the work done by volunteers in undertaking surveys and the totem pole is a fantastic visual representation of some of the species found on the site.

**Groundwork East** won a special CPRE Mark for the range of projects undertaken across Bedfordshire. One project was community food growing hubs which are going from strength to strength. Groundwork East have since become involved in the Veg Cities campaign which is a campaign helping schools to grow, cook, share and eat more vegetables, helping them to expand the hubs. During summer 2019 groups and individuals were invited to help plant up the community gardens, care for them and harvest the produce. Sessions have been delivered that focus on food growing, healthy eating and mental well-being.

**Incredible Edible** in Dunstable received their CPRE Mark in the Greening Urban Spaces category. In February 2019 they started to raise funds to create a new wheelchair accessible garden, using Eco Plastic Wood for the raised beds. This product is made from recycled coffee cups and will never rot or need painting. The garden was installed in May, the local community came together to raise the funds and help with the installation. To celebrate there was a huge Big Lunch party on Saturday 1st June which organiser Sahira tells us was "dedicated to man's best friend and everyone brought their dogs." They also had the very first flash mob in Dunstable, dancing to 'Happy'.

**Friends of Bedford Cemetery** let us know how they felt about their Highly Commended Award for Biodiversity & Landscape Improvement. "It's nice to get recognition, for people to see that you've achieved something." The award has helped make them keener to progress. Educational initiatives with schools have developed; they have become a Bedford Creative Arts Culture Challenge Provider and are looking forward to working more closely with Artsmark schools and supporting the arts and creativity elements of the national curriculum.



**Edible High Town** were Highly Commended in the Greening Urban Spaces category, it is a volunteer led project which since the awards has continued to work hard to transform previously unloved spaces.

**Chris Dodson Thatching** received a Highly Commended Award in the Sustainable Enterprise category. "Our involvement in the Sustainable Enterprise section, always reminds me of how as a business we should operate. There is sustainability in enterprise, training and so on, as well as trying to source materials from sustainable sources." Chris also wrote very movingly about the influence of his Grandfather, also a thatcher, on his outlook.

**Bletsoe Lady Smockers** were commended in the Biodiversity & Landscape Improvement category. "It was exciting to get the award and we were so proud to tell the village about it and received kind comments. It has given us confidence to carry on the work and begin to try some new things". Ideas for the future include creating a stumpery in a dark part of the field for young people to enjoy, a daffodil planting day for villagers to plant up bulbs for spring and organising bat watching evenings.

**Nominations will open soon so please start thinking about projects near you that might want to enter the 2020 Awards.**

## Biodiversity Matters

**CPRE Bedfordshire have consistently highlighted the threat to biodiversity posed by the planned A6-M1 Link Road. Here we explore what biodiversity means and why it is important.**

For a small county Bedfordshire is home to a surprising variety of landscapes and habitats – from the chalk downs of the Chilterns to the Great Ouse Valley, the heathland of the Greensand Ridge and lakes created from old brick and gravel pits.



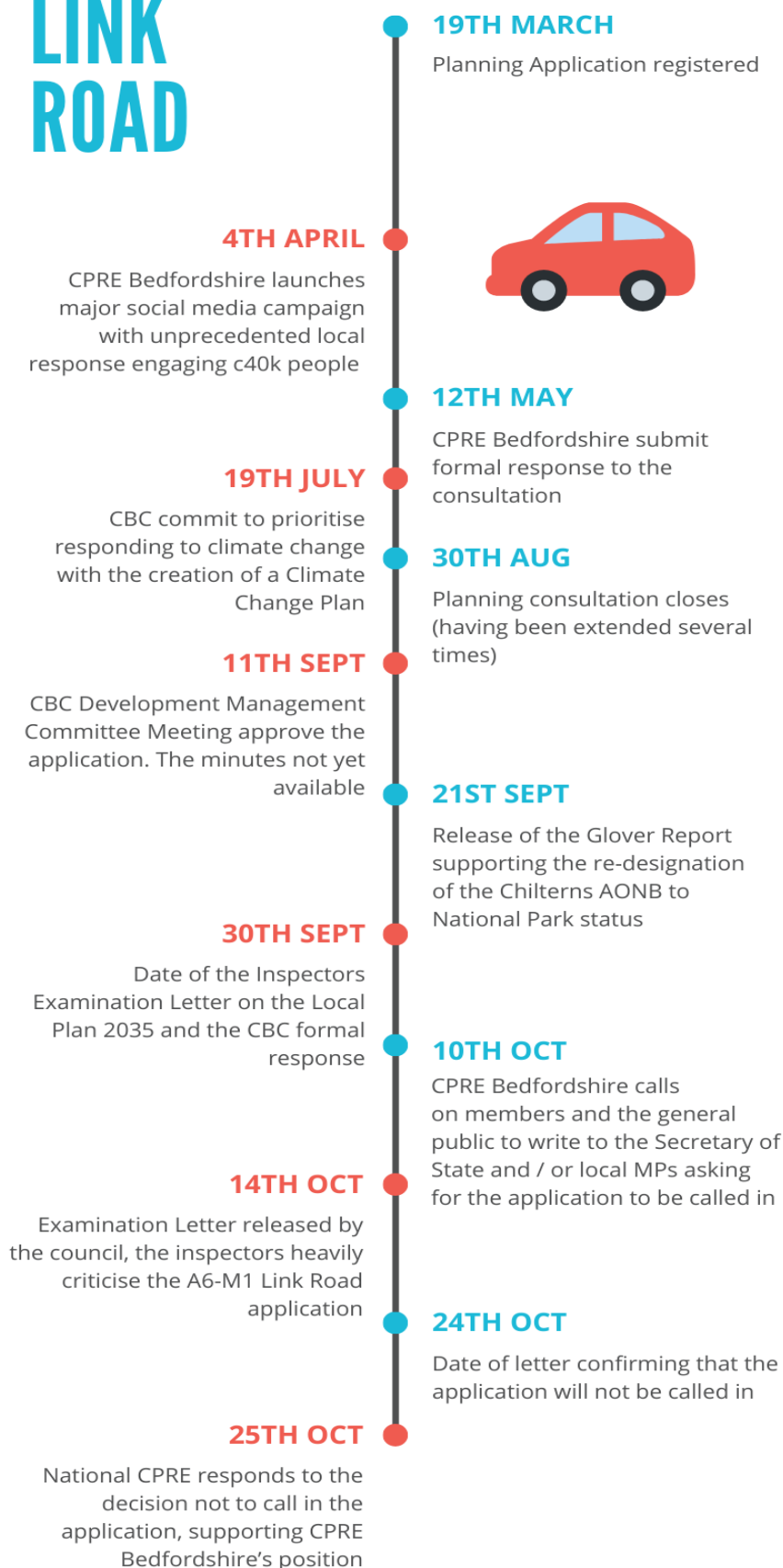
If we continue with business as usual, 1 million species will be eradicated from the planet. The loss of species and habitats poses as much a danger to life on Earth as climate change does. These are the messages of the latest IPBES Global Assessment report, the first major international review of biodiversity since 2005. The report is a systematic review of 15,000 scientific and government papers, as well as drawing on indigenous knowledge from around the world. The UK government has signed up, along with 131 other countries.

The technical term for life on Earth, 'biodiversity', is a scientific measure of the variety of species, habitats, and ecosystems across the planet. It is essential for human existence and integral to a flourishing countryside. As well as underpinning the food we eat and the air we breathe, we depend on biodiversity for protection from other threats, like pollution, flooding and climate breakdown.

### TIMELINE

# A6-M1 LINK ROAD

The CPRE Bedfordshire guide to how the A6-M1 Link Road story has unfolded





The IPBES report assessed changes in biodiversity over the past five decades and demonstrates that rates of extinction are accelerating hundreds of times faster than usual. The red squirrel, natterjack toad, and turtle dove are all in peril in our countryside, alongside many insects that we rely on. But why? What is driving our living world to the brink? And, most importantly, what can be done?

The biggest driver of biodiversity loss is 'land-use change': specifically, converting and managing wild land for agriculture and development. Agriculture in particular has had the largest impact on ecosystems that people depend on for food, clean water and a stable climate.



Photo by Keith Brown

## Agriculture

We'll need to significantly change the way our food is grown to avert disaster. Last year CPRE's report explained how the thin layer of soil covering surface of our planet is critical to all life on earth. Healthy soil hosts an incredible diversity of life from tiny, single-celled organisms to fungi, insects, and animals like moles and badgers. Protecting the nation's soil is essential, but we must also reverse the trends by regenerating it to health. Farmers should be supported to phase out ploughing, cut down on fertilisers and pesticides, and diversify their crops.



New wildflower meadow at Dunstable Downs

## Countryside nature restoration

Restoring nature is critical to reversing the loss of biodiversity. By planting trees, shrubs, wildflower meadows, and reintroducing lost animals it is possible to restore ecosystems. In National Parks and across the countryside, we must stop the draining and burning of peat bogs. Our friends at the Campaign for National Parks recently highlighted exciting peatland restoration going on in Yorkshire. The IPBES report also highlighted the importance of local communities taking the lead in such conservation projects, with benefits for people as well as nature. CPRE's work on enhancing our Green Belt is set to tackle these issues head on.



Tree planting in Marston Vale

## Climate change, climate change, climate change

Biodiversity and climate are inseparable, and combined, present the greatest threat our countryside has ever faced. Restoring nature is our primary defence against climate breakdown, and climate breakdown will continue to accelerate the decline of nature. Natural ecosystems suck up 60% of our carbon emissions, and nature-based solutions, like planting trees, nurturing soils, and restoring ecosystems, can provide over a third of the climate solutions needed until 2030 with huge benefits for biodiversity.

All of these changes require big commitments from the Government. CPRE will be redoubling its efforts to ensure the government is held accountable – through our work with partners such as the Climate Coalition at the mass lobby of Parliament on 26 June, and our work through Wildlife and Countryside Link and Greener UK calling for the Environment Bill and Agriculture Bill to work for nature. Continuing on our current path will lead to staggering losses for the countryside and us all, but by acting ambitiously, we have the chance to transform our future so people and nature thrive together.

This article is based on a blog that first appeared on [cpre.org.uk](http://cpre.org.uk) by Mair Floyd-Bosley

# Transport

## Major road network developments - A1 and A428

With the growing awareness of the rapid acceleration of climate change and the dire consequences we face unless we take urgent action to reduce our carbon emissions, it's alarming to see the apparent reluctance of government agencies to take these issues seriously into account when it comes to transport policy and the need to find alternatives to more and more, bigger and 'better' roads. There are some notable examples of this in Bedfordshire and the surrounding region.

In 2016 Highways England published its Stage 3 report on the A1 East of England Strategic Study. The report looks at the need for improvements to the A1 between Junction 1 (the M25) and Junction 17 (Peterborough). This included an option to build a section of new motorway between Junction 10 (near Biggleswade) and Junction 14 (near Buckden) through a realignment of the existing route to the west. Decisions about the preferred option were delayed to allow time for the scheme to be considered in the changing context of the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade, together with improvements to the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet.

This context has now moved on significantly since the report was published with the upgrade of the A14 at an advanced stage of construction and the announcement in June this year of the chosen route for a new 10 mile dual carriageway to replace the existing A428. The A428 scheme plans to deliver substantial improvements aimed at relieving congestion at the Black Cat roundabout through the introduction of an underpass which enables the A1 to flow freely from north to south and the new A428 dual carriageway to flow freely west to east. The plans for this

scheme are for construction work to commence late 2021 and the road to open in 2025/26.

With decisions about the A1 having been delayed to take account of the A14 and A428 developments, it would be expected that an announcement regarding the A1 would have been made by now. Whilst Highways England are only willing to say that the future of the A1 scheme is still subject to ongoing development work, other well informed sources have commented that the A1 realignment option is being looked upon favourably and may even be seen as a higher priority than the Milton Keynes to Oxford section of the OxCam Expressway.

Why this could be the case is baffling. The greatest level of congestion on the stretch of the A1 in question is at the Black Cat roundabout - so why should Highways England be contemplating spending nearly £2 billion on a problem that it is already planning to resolve, at great expense, by improvements they plan to deliver through the A428 scheme?

Even more so, why is this option still on the table when other less costly local improvements are available and in its own appraisal, the realignment option is shown to present the greatest potential for significant adverse environmental impacts with increased emissions of nitrogen oxides and greenhouse gases.

Isn't it time for Highways England to wake up to the future and make a serious commitment to find radically different transport solutions rather than paying lip service to the need to prioritise environmental protection whilst continuing to build more motorways and expressways? These major road schemes are known to simply attract more traffic and ultimately lead to the reappearance of the congestion problems they are supposed to be designed to cure.

## Transport Strategy for England's Economic Heartland

The Heartland's Outline Transport Strategy was published this summer to stimulate debate about how the Heartland's transport system needs to develop over the next 30 years. England's Economic Heartland is a partnership of political and business leaders focussed on realising the economic potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

The strategy aims to set a new direction for the years ahead. It describes the nature of the challenges and opportunities to be addressed face collectively within their vision to connect people and places with opportunities and services and an ambition to achieve a zero-carbon transport system by 2050. The strategy claims to recognise that





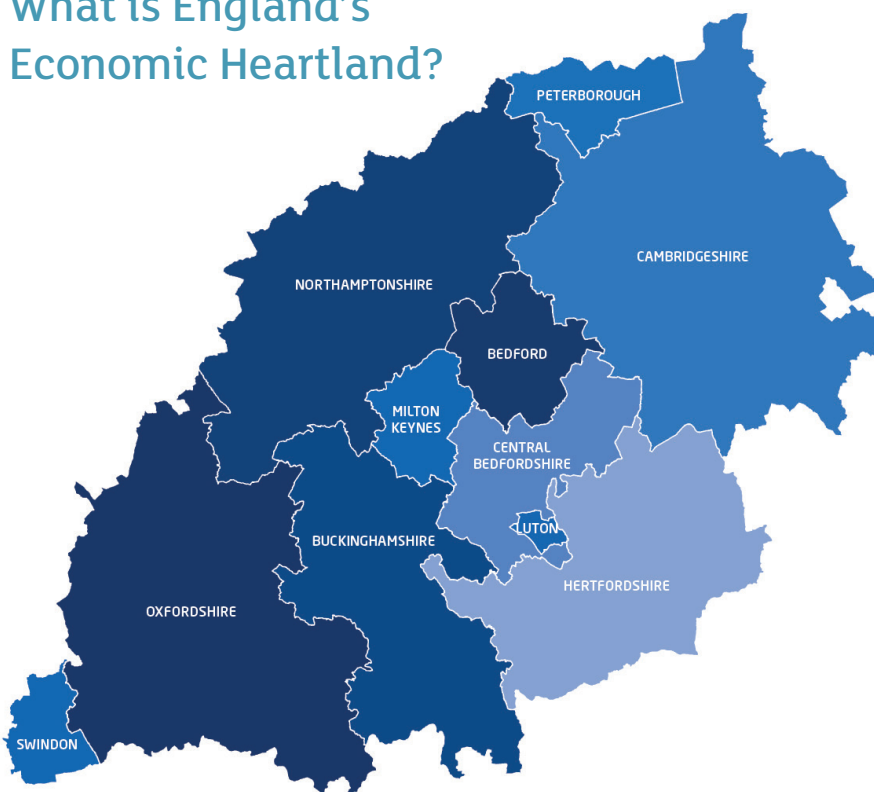
the way forward cannot be business as usual.

The strategy provides a number of case studies and illustrated models of innovative approaches which they believe will deliver on the key principles of the strategy which are; Enabling Economic Growth, Accessibility and Inclusion, Quality of life and Environment. For example, in High Streets integrated transport which supports the rejuvenation of town centres by offering safer, greener and more attractive places for people to enjoy, in New Communities, transport hubs incorporating rapid transport, rail, local bus routes and cycling infrastructure.

Overall the strategy brings forward many useful ideas and new approaches. It advocates an integrated approach to transport strategy at a local and regional level which CPRE very much supports. However, the report is at this stage very light on setting out how a transport strategy based on these new ideas can be delivered.

Whilst it claims to adhere to the principle that economic growth must not be at the expense of the environment, the strategy is very focussed on the part that transport can play in supporting the ambitions of the business community to achieve transformational economic growth. There are inherent difficulties in balancing these competing pressures and, given the existential threats posed by climate change and pollution, it is imperative that new ways of fixing our transport system are pursued with greater urgency than is so far apparent from the massive investment in roads that we see all around us on a daily basis.

## What is England's Economic Heartland?



England's Economic heartland is yet another new QUANGO introduced quietly and without fanfare by government.

Their website says:

*"...Stretching from Swindon to Cambridgeshire and from Northamptonshire to Hertfordshire, England's Economic Heartland brings political and business leaders together in a strategic collaborative partnership with a shared commitment to realise the economic potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and surrounding areas..."*

*We are the Sub-national Transport Body for the region. Our overarching Transport Strategy will be a 30 year strategic vision for our transport system that puts the needs of businesses and individuals at the forefront of investment decisions"*

3 new Sub-national Transport bodies have been created by government and the Department for Transport: Midlands Connect, England's

Economic Heartland (EEH) and Transport for the South East (TfSE).

The Board of EEH is formed by the leaders of the various local authorities. James Jamieson, leader of Central Bedfordshire Council is Vice-Chair. Dave Hodgson, elected Mayor of Bedford Borough Council, is Chair of the Strategic Transport Forum part of EEH. Their website says: (the Forum) *"...allows partners to work together with one voice when formulating policy."*

The meetings of the Strategic Transport Forum are open to members of the public and the public are able to ask questions at the start of the meeting.

CPRE Bedfordshire's trustees have attended 2 meetings and asked a question regarding the planning application for the A6 – M1 Link Road at the September meeting.

[www.englandseconomicheartland.com](http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com)

## Who are CBRE?

CBRE is well known to Bedford Borough Council. BBC employed them to make so called “independent assessments” of developer viability claims that they were unable to build affordable homes profitably. It came as no surprise that CBRE supported the developers.

We brought this to the attention of local people a few years back when Barratt homes were able to cut 200 desperately needed affordable homes on their development to the west of Kempston due to CBRE’s assessment in their favour.

CBRE are a global, American based real estate company. Their objective according to their website is to “*Maximising the value of our clients’ real estate*”. They are one of the largest real estate companies operating in London.

Their website says:

*“CBRE Group, Inc. is the world’s largest commercial real estate services and investment firm, with 2018 revenues of \$21.3 billion and more than 90,000 employees (excluding affiliate offices). CBRE offers a range of integrated services, including facilities, transaction and project management; property management; investment management; appraisal and valuation; property leasing; strategic consulting; property sales; mortgage services and development services.”*

CBRE appear to be one of the key drivers behind plans for developing a huge conurbation of 1 million homes (20 cities the size of Cambridge) across the Ox – Cam Arc and a population increase of 1.9 million people (twice the population of Birmingham).

As part of their presentation to those attending the launch of EEH Outline

Transport Strategy, CBRE said that:

*“Population growth is a strong indicator of opportunity” (for property and land investors.)*

We believe they said this because it ensures a strong demand, increasing prices of homes and therefore developer profitability but in our experience increasing prices is not what local people desperate for an affordable home want to hear.

They also stated that the EEH is “*Part of a globally significant Region – but it includes Greater London!*”

Our interpretation of this is that they are suggesting that the whole of the EEH area should be seen as part of Greater London thereby creating a London mega city similar to those seen in the USA.

[www.cbre.co.uk](http://www.cbre.co.uk)

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## Undemocratic SEMLEP Local Industrial Strategy gives go ahead to massive population growth in Bedfordshire

The newly released SEMLEP Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is calling for a continued massive and environmentally unsustainable growth in population across the SEMLEP area which includes Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and the Aylesbury Vale.

The LIS was quietly slipped out by means of a joint Government and SEMLEP statement on 19 July, just as the summer holidays began.

This ill-conceived strategy which will influence the Local Plans of all Bedfordshire local authorities, has been undertaken without any public consultation and with no environmental assessment - unbelievable at a time of catastrophic biodiversity loss and climate change.

The LIS which has evaded the democratic process will lead to further massive house building across Bedfordshire and the SEMLEP area – not

to satisfy the needs of local people, but to encourage a huge population movement into the area from elsewhere in the UK.

We welcome a strategy that plans for a strong, healthy economy for Bedfordshire and the SEMLEP area however, this Local Industrial Strategy demonstrates how back-to-front our planning system is.

The starting point for economic growth should be the natural growth in the population of Bedfordshire and the SEMLEP area for which employment might be needed, with the focus then on identifying the right jobs in the right places in order to reduce unsustainable commuting. This LIS is the reverse of this process – it seeks to maximise jobs and then look to see what might be needed to support them, including the inevitable increase in long distance commuting and massive increase in population.”

This LIS will lead to the unacceptable over-development of our countryside already under terrible pressure from climate change. It will mean further biodiversity loss already at critical levels and reduce the quality of life of local people.

It seems to us that the Government and SEMLEP are operating in some kind of time warp blissfully unaware of the environmental crisis facing us all. Business as usual seems to be the strategy.

CPRE Oxfordshire has been equally critical of the Oxfordshire LIS also launched at the same time and without any public consultation.

**More details can be found on the News section of our website.**



## Ten things you can do to take local action on climate change

With climate change in the news we take a look at a what you can do locally to make a difference.

1. **Tell your MP** that climate change and environmental issues matter to you, make your letter or email personal so that they can see why you care.
2. **Take community action**, join a grassroots group and get involved in local solutions.
3. **Think about what you eat** – have meat free days, choose organic and local produce or grow your own (see opposite).
4. **For short journeys choose to walk or cycle**, for longer journeys think about taking the bus or train. If it's time to replace your car look at hybrid or electric vehicles.
5. **Switch to a green energy supplier** or tariff to show your support for renewable energy sources.
6. **Save energy** at home by turning off lights and appliances that are not being used. Make sure you have good insulation.
7. **Invest ethically** – look for green banks, ethical pension funds and fossil fuel free investment portfolios.
8. **Take the train not the plane** if travelling around the UK and Europe. Look at carbon offsetting schemes with trusted green projects.
9. **Consume less** – waste less, upcycle, recycle, share, make, fix, compost.
10. **Ask your favourite brands about their packaging**, sourcing and environmental policies. Change to brands that use less plastic or support environmental projects.



## Local Spotlight – Jo's Loaves

Jo Bottrill bakes sourdough, which is a naturally-leavened bread made using a slow fermentation of just flour and water, plus more flour and a little salt. She began from her own kitchen, where baking bread as a hobby became a growing obsession. Learning about the health benefits of genuine sourdough bread over fake and often additive-ridden alternatives, her passion for creating something more natural and digestible for herself and her little family grew and grew. Over eight years later, Jo finally admits that she has created a viable (albeit small) business and can no longer call it a hobby. She now bakes between 280 and 450 loaves a week single-handedly from a small industrial unit which she rents. The flour is all organic, and she uses local suppliers for many of her other natural ingredients which go into some of her loaves. Her 5-seeded sourdough is a best seller after white sourdough and most of the loaves are also vegan. Several local farm shops, cafes and restaurants buy her loaves every week and Jo also attends regular farmers markets in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Her ultimate dream would be to run her own little café, selling good food with good bread.



This year, Jo was named as one of 21 official Ambassadors for the Real Bread Campaign, which is part of Sustain, the charity for better Food & Farming. This honorary role is in recognition of her support of the Campaign, her dedication to baking real bread made without additives and her ability to inspire others to do so.

For further information, visit [www.josloaves.co.uk](http://www.josloaves.co.uk).

## Branch News

### Neighbourhood Planning Workshop

Wednesday 4th March 2020 , Wilstead Village Hall

Come together with representatives from Parish Councils in Bedfordshire to learn and share experiences of Neighbourhood Planning.

The event aims to provide information and to offer opportunities for discussion to Parish Council delegates across a range of interest levels, from councils thinking about starting a Neighbourhood Plan, to councils that are well advanced or already have an adopted plan. The programme is designed to provide time for Parishes who are well advanced in their plan making to share their

experience with Parishes that are at an early stage, as well as opportunities for early and advanced groups to discuss and share experiences in separate groups.

The workshop will include input from a keynote speaker, Dave Chetwyn, who is a leading expert on neighbourhood planning. Dave is already providing consultancy support to several planning groups in Bedfordshire. He will provide an opening address that will highlight the benefits of neighbourhood planning and how to make an effective plan.

The discussion groups provide opportunities for delegates to focus on their specific needs, for example; to think about whether a neighbourhood plan would benefit their community, and for groups at an advanced stage, to exchange ideas about completing and implementing their plan.

Watch out for more information or register your interest at [info@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:info@cprebeds.org.uk)

### New look for CPRE

As you may have read in Countryside Voice, the CPRE magazine, our branding is being refreshed. You'll be seeing lots of changes in how things look and how we explain what CPRE Bedfordshire is all about. A new website is on the way, you'll still be able to read about the latest news on campaigns from across the county but there will also be new kinds of content celebrating our countryside and encouraging people to enjoy it.

All that plus - your Summer 2020 edition of Bedfordshire Matters will have a new look so watch this space!

### Get Involved

If you could give us some of your time and have some skills or expertise that you think could help us, please email [lois.wright@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:lois.wright@cprebeds.org.uk) or phone on **01234 880624** (office is open most Mondays and Thursdays, otherwise please leave a message and we'll return your call)

### The 2020 photo competition

will be launched in the spring; we'll be asking for your photos of people enjoying or working in the Bedfordshire countryside.

The winning image will be used on the cover of the next edition of Bedfordshire Matters.

### About us

**Campaign to Protect Rural England** is a national charity that exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

We have 60,000 supporters, a branch in every county, eight regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in London. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning.

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

**Bedfordshire Matters** is the biannual magazine of Bedfordshire's CPRE branch. CPRE Bedfordshire is a local independent charity who works to protect and promote the countryside and urban green spaces of Bedfordshire.

Registered Charity No: 1023435



**Bedfordshire**  
Campaign to Protect Rural England

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