



The countryside charity
Bedfordshire

Trustees' Report and Annual Accounts 2019

“Protecting Bedfordshire’s countryside and urban green spaces for present and future generations”



CPRE Bedfordshire is a local Bedford based charity. We are the only environmental organisation that stands up against the threats to our Bedfordshire countryside and urban green spaces from unsustainable and unsuitable development of all types.

We are affiliated to the national CPRE organisation.

The pressures on our countryside and urban green spaces for new homes and other developments (new roads, warehousing etc.) continues to grow right across the county as it has for the last few years, reflecting an increasing population and the growth of Milton Keynes, Cambridge and other surrounding towns.

Bedfordshire is already one of the most densely populated counties in England (ranked 13th of 47). This pressure makes the work we do to protect our countryside all the more important.

We promote the recognition of the intrinsic value of the countryside and urban green spaces which are so important to our quality of life.

Responding to the hugely important issues of the Climate Change Emergency and of Biodiversity Loss are very much at the forefront of all the actions we take to ensure our vision of a beautiful and thriving Bedfordshire countryside that enriches all our lives.



PLANNING AND CAMPAIGNING

Oxford – Milton Keynes – Bedford – Cambridge Arc (Corridor)

Plans for massive development across the Oxford – Cambridge Arc continue to cause us and our colleagues at CPRE branches across the Arc, serious concern. Whilst we are fully supportive of East – West Rail, which we see primarily as a means of reducing congestion on the principal road networks, reducing air pollution and carbon footprint. Members will know that we are firmly opposed to the sheer scale of housing development and population increase proposed across the Arc - one million new homes and a population increase of 1.9 million by 2050.

During the year CPRE Bedfordshire continued to work with other CPRE Branches across the Arc and our National Office to fight against these proposals which we consider to be unsustainable and highly damaging to the Bedfordshire environment.

Our campaigning work has been very effective, particularly in relation to the development plans for the new motorway class “Expressway” linking J13 of the M1 to Oxford. As far as Bedfordshire is concerned this will have a devastating impact on the countryside around the Woburn, Woburn Sands and Aspley Guise area.

We have worked with the local Wildlife Trusts, and other action groups to raise awareness of the issues and local people have joined us in making strong representations to government. We are hopeful that government will listen and think again.

We believe that upgrading the current principal road network is a more sustainable option than ploughing a new motorway class road through pristine countryside - the prime objective of which is the opening up of new areas of countryside for housing development.

We also have reason to believe that government is now listening to our argument that the scale of housing development is unsustainable and that a policy of more equitable distribution of industrial and housing growth across the country should be pursued, instead of continued pressure on Bedfordshire and the already overheated South East.

Local Plans – Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Luton Borough

Local Plans allocate and designate land for various uses over the next 15 or 20 years so it's vitally important that we use our resources to influence Local Plans positively to ensure the long term protection of our countryside and urban green spaces.

Local Plans set out the types of development that should take place and the locations, as well as identifying areas that should be protected from development.

CPRE Bedfordshire fully recognises the need for new homes in both urban and rural areas (especially affordable homes) and for areas of employment etc. Getting the balance right is important.

As well as engaging in the Local Plan Consultation process, CPRE Bedfordshire's other principal objective has been one of communication - improving local democracy.

That is, to ensure that Members, Town & Parish Councils and the General Public are informed of the detail of the Plans and how they will impact on the Bedfordshire countryside and urban green spaces.

Luton Borough Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031

This was approved in 2017.

Luton Airport Expansion

One of our Trustees has been working with CPRE Hertfordshire and we have submitted a joint response to LBC's consultation on their plans to double the capacity of Luton Airport, increasing flight movements to 240,000 per year.

In our view these plans are completely at odds with the Climate Change Agenda recently signed up to by LBC which requires a substantial reduction in carbon emissions.

Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC's) Local Plan 2015-2035

CBC's Local Plan was submitted for approval by government appointed Inspectors in April 2018. Original plans were for the development of a massive 60,000 new homes over the plan period.

Thanks to the work of CPRE Bedfordshire in bringing the enormous scale of the proposal to the public attention, the final submitted Local Plan was reduced to 40,000 new homes.

This is still very high, representing the equivalent of ten new towns the size of Ampthill and almost all of the development will take place on Greenfield sites.

The entire housing needs of the people of Central Bedfordshire can be met with around 40% of the number of houses planned. We believe that planning to encourage large numbers of people to migrate into Central Bedfordshire from elsewhere in the UK is unsustainable.

The Local Plan was subject to an Examination in Public with 15 days of Public Hearings starting in May 2019 and finishing at the end of July 2019. CPRE Bedfordshire volunteers attended and gave evidence at the majority of these Public Hearings. We were supported by colleagues from National CPRE who provided expert evidence regarding CBC's unsustainable development proposals for the Green Belt.

In September following the Public Hearings the Inspectors wrote to CBC expressing their deep concern regarding the Local Plan and asking for major revisions.

Their **areas of concern** were precisely those highlighted by CPRE Bedfordshire namely:

- **Unsustainable development within the Green Belt**
- **The A6-M1 Link Road that will slice through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in Bedfordshire**
- **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**

We very much hope that CBC will now listen to the concerns of the Inspectors and CPRE Bedfordshire and modify their Local Plan accordingly, making it more sustainable and less damaging to the environment.

Bedford Borough Council's (BBC's) Local Plan 2030

The BBC Local Plan 2030 was submitted to the government for approval in December 2018.

In this new Local Plan, BBC announced, in the same way as CBC, that they would review their Local Plan six months after gaining approval in order to take account of the government's programme for development across the Oxford - Cambridge Arc.

This Review would reconsider the four New Town proposals previously proposed during the Local Plan 2035 consultations. We will oppose any unsustainable New Town proposals.

There are several areas of this Local Plan that we approve of:

- **The proposed construction of 1,000 new homes (a medium sized village) at the old brickworks brownfield site at Stewartby.**
- **The redevelopment of the Bedford urban area, provided that sufficient high quality green space is included and that public consultation is substantially improved.**

We remain concerned by the large number of new homes (500) proposed for each of the "Key Rural Centres" of Sharnbrook, Clapham, Bromham and Great Barford. These are very significant developments indeed for these communities - in some cases increasing housing numbers by 50%.

Overall, the housing numbers remain large – the entire housing needs of the people of Bedford Borough can be met with around 50% of the proposed numbers of new homes.

The Examination in Public was held during 2019 and CPRE Bedfordshire attended many of the Hearing days ensuring that our concerns regarding the environmental damage that some of the proposals would cause was taken into consideration by Inspectors.

The Plan was eventually approved by Inspectors at the end of December 2019 and adopted by BBC in January 2020.

The Inspectors have listened to CPRE Bedfordshire by removing the six month review and instead have said that BBC should review their Plan within years of adoption taking into consideration government proposals for development across the Ox-Cam Arc.

Although we still have significant concerns regarding some elements of the Local Plan we nevertheless congratulate BBC on their achievement.

In our view, BBC are carrying large contingencies in terms of housing numbers and this will enable them to reduce housing numbers at the Key Rural Service Centres depending on government targets.

General Planning Issues

Our planning volunteers across Bedfordshire have responded to a large number of individual planning applications that have been the cause of concern.

Due to our work, in most cases together with the local Parish Councils and Action Groups, we have had success in saving many important areas of countryside and urban green spaces from inappropriate development.

CPRE Bedfordshire representation on important regional and government organisations

During 2019 CPRE Bedfordshire Trustees and/or volunteers attended meetings of the following organisations in order to ensure that the aims and objectives of our members are taken into consideration in their decision making processes:

- **South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (PDIIDG Group)**
- **Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership – Trustee is Board member**
- **Highways England, Stakeholder Group Meetings – with regard to highways developments in our county and those impacting on our county**
- **England’s Economic Heartland – Strategic Transport Forum**



BRANCH MATTERS

Volunteering

We welcomed John English as a new Trustee during 2019.

We are in urgent need of more planning volunteers particularly for the Central Bedfordshire and Luton areas. The only experience people need is a commitment to the countryside, our urban green spaces and CPRE values. Full training and mentoring will be provided.

We are also in need of people who would like to help us in other ways - our website contains a list of roles which may be of interest and if you have specialist skills please let us know – Please contact our manager, Lois Wright.

We are very grateful to everyone who gives their time to CPRE Bedfordshire, ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy our beautiful Bedfordshire countryside and urban green spaces.

Social media activities

A new social media strategy (using Facebook, Twitter, creating a new blog, website etc.) was implemented during 2019 and it has proved to be very successful in raising awareness of CPRE Bedfordshire and our campaigns, both with our members and amongst the general public. For example, our campaign against the development of the A6 – M1 link road which will carve through the Chilterns AONB in Bedfordshire was viewed by more than 40,000 people!

The strategy has been implemented by a new part-time employee (previously a volunteer) who works for eight hours per week on a fixed one year contract to enable us to assess the effectiveness of our social media activities.

We have also been working, in conjunction with national CPRE, on a more modern website which will use the new CPRE branding. The new website will be launched early in 2020.



New Office

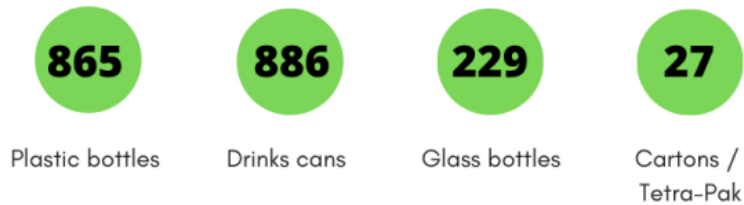
In March 2019 CPRE Bedfordshire moved to a new office within the CVS Building in Bromham Road, Bedford which accommodates a number of different charities. The new office provides slightly larger accommodation allowing us to take on additional volunteers. It also has improved IT services. In addition we will be able to use the meeting facilities of the CVS building

The move will be cost neutral compared to our previous office.

CPRE Green Clean – litter picking event

During September 2019 CPRE Bedfordshire trialled a new “Green Clean” programme which is being undertaken by CPRE Branches across the country with the aim of improving our countryside and urban green spaces but also increasing awareness of CPRE and our objectives e.g. our “plastic bottle deposit return scheme”, and our aim to protect important areas of countryside.

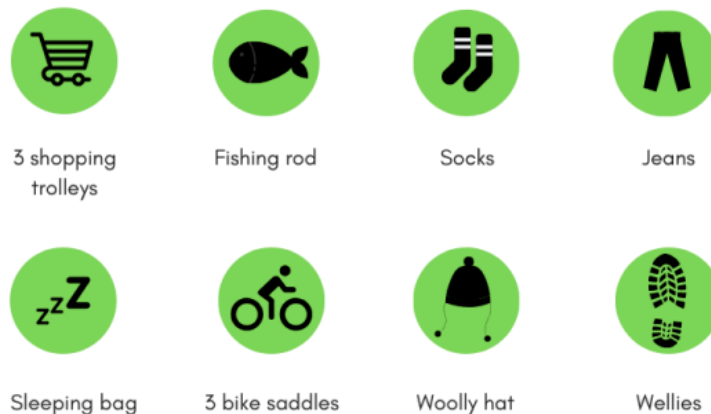
The site we chose was the Houghton Regis Chalk Pit, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the northern edge of the town which local residents had identified as in need of a good tidy up.



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



OTHER ITEMS FOUND INCLUDED...



Funding

We are hugely grateful to all those who supported our fundraising activities during 2019 – thank you!

We were particularly thrilled to receive a legacy of £5,000 during the year – it has made a significant difference to our financial position. In addition, The Woburn Society, an organisation that we have worked very closely with over the years, decided to wind up and we were very fortunate to receive a substantial donation from them.

The funding of CPRE Bedfordshire is a hugely important issue for us and although we were successful in raising funds during 2019, there is still much to do if we wish to continue to be effective in our objective of protecting our beautiful Bedfordshire countryside.

For this reason, we intend to put a greater effort into fundraising during 2020 – it is very important that we build some effective reserves to ensure our long-term survival.

Manager and Staff

The Trustees would like to express their sincere thanks to our Manager, Susan Walls, who left us during the year for her work and commitment during her time with us.

We warmly welcome her replacement, Lois Wright who joined us in March 2019.

We would also like to thank Shelly Dennison our Communications Officer for the work she has done helping to determine and implementing our Social Media Strategy so effectively during the year. Our thanks also go to Jo Barrow for the admin support she has provided.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Trustees and our volunteers for their incredible commitment and hard work during the year which has been extremely busy one.

Finally, on behalf of the Trustees I would like to thank you, our members for your continued and highly valued support without which our work to protect the Bedfordshire countryside and urban green spaces would not be possible.

Gerry Sansom

Chair, CPRE Bedfordshire

February 2020

Photography credits:

p1 Nicky Vincent

p2 Keith Brown

p6 Barry Halton – projects which have featured in CPRE Bedfordshire's Living Countryside Awards

CPRE BEDFORDSHIRE - 2019 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Income and Expenditure Account

Year ending	31 st December 2019		31 st December 2018	
	£	£	£	£
INCOME				
Branch Shares		8,656.18		8,247.12
Raffle		61.50		126.07
Restricted Grants, Donations & Legacies		11,000.00		0.00
Branch 30th Birthday Appeal		0.00		6,126.04
General Grants, Donations & Legacies		11,782.90		12,082.23
Business Account Interest		53.02		46.79
Event/Presentation Revenues		345.00		40.00
Local Countryside Awards Revenue		0.00		1,421.00
Planning Workshop		0.00		1,552.00
Gift Aid income tax refunds from HMRC		1,686.19		356.45
Total income		33,584.79		29,997.70
EXPENDITURE				
Postage		291.28		247.43
Beds Matters, Printing		2,637.34		3,880.41
Printing, Photocopying		76.63		48.33
Travel Expenses		314.95		245.80
Room Hire/Refreshments		173.39		791.98
Affiliations/Fees		25.00		42.50
Adverts, publications & presentation materials		25.00		236.12
Events Charges		122.71		411.00
Local Countryside Awards Costs		0.00		1,756.74
BDO Salary etc		19,503.80		13,547.08
National membership subscriptions		0.00		25.00
Staff welfare costs		0.00		406.45
Staff recruitment advertising		240.00		0.00
Action Fund		2,400.00		0.00
Miscellaneous		18.75		0.00
		25,830.85		21,638.84
Costs of Bedford Office				
Rent		4,821.86		3,432.00
Insurance		323.44		325.36
Office Consumables		22.17		211.44
Telephone/IT		787.45		1,424.82
Relocation costs		1,456.77		0.00
Capital Equipment		0.00		0.00
		7,411.69		5,393.62
Total expenditure		33,242.54		27,032.46
Surplus/(Deficit)		£342.25		£2,965.24

Balance Sheet

Year ending	31 st December 2019		31 st December 2018	
	£	£	£	£
ASSETS & LIABILITIES				
Cheque Account		1,357.99		508.88
Business Account		20,482.54		21,133.52
Cash in Hand		8.25		40.57
Total		21,858.78		21,683.77
BRANCH FUNDS				
Brought Forward from Previous Year		21,689.77		18,724.53
Excess income over Expenditure		342.25		2,965.24
Carried Forward		£22,032.02		£21,689.77

Chris Hall - Treasurer

Date: 17 March 2020

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

I have examined the foregoing Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet. In my opinion they give a true and fair view of the state of the Branch's affairs as at 31st December 2019.

Margaret Carpenter

Margaret Carpenter - Independent Examiner

Date: 17 March 2020