



Chair's column

Gerry Sansom



On behalf of the Trustees and members I would like to warmly welcome Lois Wright as our new Branch Manager. Lois comes with a wealth of experience of managing organisations in the charity sector. She lives in Bedfordshire and has a keen interest in the countryside, our urban green spaces and the environment generally. We also take this opportunity to thank Susan Walls very much indeed for her hard work and commitment. during her time with us. We are particularly grateful for the work Susan did to improve our social media presence which is such an important part of our work. Joining Lois is Jo Barrow as Office Administrator. Jo has many years of admin experience in the sector and will be supporting our small team.

BBC funded Local Democracy Reporters start work in Bedfordshire

In the last few months the new Local Democracy Reporters, paid for by the public through their BBC license fee, have started work across the country. As far as Bedfordshire is concerned a Local Democracy Reporter has been attending and reporting on the Planning Committee Meetings of Bedford Borough Council recently.

According to the BBC:

"The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency: funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. It's like a franchise: different companies with different approaches, but using common editorial standards and all publishing into the same system."

The BBC goes on to say:

"The core purpose of the LDRS is to provide impartial coverage of the regular business and workings of local authorities in the UK, and other relevant democratic institutions such as mayoralties, combined authority areas, P&CCs, quangos, etc."

As we understand it, there will be 3 Local Democracy Reporters in Bedfordshire, one for each Local Authority Area. They will all be employed by Johnston Press (JPI Media Ltd) the owners of the Times & Citizen, Luton News and other Bedfordshire news titles both online and hard copy. Johnston Press have been give an LDRS contract by the BBC.

It is unclear to us if reporters will need to conform to the BBC "editorial standards" or to those of The Johnston Press. This would seem to us to be a very important matter particularly if they are funded by the public.

We look forward to the reporters reversing the massive democratic deficit currently experienced in Bedfordshire.

More information on the LDRS can be found here: www.bbc.com/lnp/ldrs

Oxford – Cambridge Arc: Local Democracy in Crisis!

CPRE Bedfordshire has repeatedly claimed that there is a huge democratic deficit regarding government proposals to create a massive conurbation across the Arc.

Now a survey commissioned by CPRE shows that 67% of the residents of Bedfordshire know nothing of the proposals for the development of 1 million homes across the Arc by 2050, equivalent to 20 cites the size of Cambridge - and a population increase of 1.9 million people – twice the size of Birmingham (pop: 1m), across an Arc only 85 miles in length.

We believe that the people of Bedfordshire have been starved of information on the Oxford – Cambridge Arc. For example, local radio and some newspapers, either online or in print, have steadfastly failed to raise awareness of the scale of the Ox-Cam development proposals.

The Mayor of Bedford and the Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council have both studiously avoided talking to their electorate about it — even denying that they had anything to do with it despite signing up to the latest government "Joint Declaration" issued in the Spring.

While there is support for new housing across the Arc, the majority of Bedfordshire residents (64%) do not support the scale of house building proposed. If any development does take

place, an overwhelming majority (75%) of residents believe that the housing needs of local people must take priority, and three quarters (74%) believe that more social housing is what is most needed for the area.

CPRE has called for a Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry into the Ox-Cam Arc proposals.

We very much hope that the new Local Democracy Reporters introduced by the BBC and paid for with license payers' money will shine a more enquiring light on the matter.

Read more about the poll online bit.ly/ OxCamArc

CPRE Bedfordshire People



Lois Wright

Role at CPRE Bedfordshire : Manager

One thing you hope to achieve in your first year: Engaging more with members, volunteers and local communities

Born in Bedfordshire or blown in: Blown in from Sussex via several other places including Malta.

Favourite local eatery: Ampthill Deli & Kitchen for their local food and friendly welcome.

Favourite Bedfordshire green space: Difficult to decide between Rushmere Country Park, Leighton Buzzard and King's Arms Garden, Ampthill.

Jo Barrow

Role at CPRE Bedfordshire: Office Administrator

One thing you hope to achieve in your first year: Streamline the administrative processes in the office to enable the whole team to be even more effective in promoting the countryside.

Born in Bedfordshire or blown in: Born in Cheshire but moved to Bedford just days after being born.

Favourite local eatery: I don't eat out much but love a coffee in Coffee with Art in Bedford.

Favourite Bedfordshire green space: Riverside walks near Priory Marina Bedford and Willington Danish Camp.





John English

Role at CPRE Bedfordshire: CPRE
Trustee and member of the Planning
Committee.

One thing you hope to achieve in your first year: To become a valued member of the Bedfordshire Team.

Born in Bedfordshire or blown in: Blown in from Surrey via Sussex, however lived in Bedfordshire for 31 years.

Favourite Bedfordshire eatery: Fratelli in Woburn, a true Italian experience.

Favourite Bedfordshire green Space:Greensand Ridge and lost railway tracks in the county.

How you can help

There are many ways you can get involved with the work we do. You could:

- Volunteer we are looking to expand the work we do. We are looking for volunteers to join us in a number of interesting and varied roles. Please see our website for the latest opportunities, there are many ways to give your time to help the branch
- Become a trustee
- Become a member or introduce friends and family to CPRE Bedfordshire
- Follow us on social media, like and share our posts
- Make a donation







Please see our website for more information about any of these ways to help CPRE Bedfordshire grow and be able to do more across the county.

www.cprebeds.org.uk

BEDFORDSHIRE MATTERS ISSUE NO 63: SUMMER 2019



CPRE Bedfordshire condemns proposed A6-M1 Link Road

Central Bedfordshire Council has put forward plans to build a new road north of Luton linking the A6 to junction 11a of the M1.

The road will carve through Green Belt countryside north of Luton and along the edge of the hugely important Chilterns AONB – the "green lungs" for the people of Luton.

It will be very close to the beautiful Sundon ancient woodland destroying the tranquillity of the area.

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) say that it will reduce traffic flow and improve access to Luton but in fact the whole point of the road is to enable the development of a huge Rail Freight Interchange close to Junction 11a at Sundon. This will encourage more heavy trucks to use the road and the A6.

More vehicles will be routed on to the M1 which is already operating well over capacity. More cars and trucks will be

encouraged to use the A6 north & south, which is already overcrowded.

CBC say that the new road will also support the development of 4,000 new homes (about the same size as Ampthill) on Green Belt land between the north of Luton and the new road.

This housing development will itself generate a huge amount of new traffic.

CPRE Bedfordshire believe that CBC's priority should be to build the 5,000 new homes already given permission at Houghton Regis North and not destroy important Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty with another new road that will get jammed up as quickly as it's built.

In our response to the consultation we noted that

"At the outset of the production of the Local Plan, CBC promised that they would respect the views of the residents and protect the countryside we valued and which made Central Bedfordshire a 'great place to live and work'. They would be reneging on that promise if they grant planning permission for this road, and be out of step with the new reality of the immediacy of climate change and the need to act to reduce and not increase carbon emissions."

CPRE Bedfordshire's campaign created a big impression on our Facebook page, nearly 40,000 people saw our post, many of whom joined in the conversation or signed up to our mailing list to keep up to date with the latest news.

Read more online bit.ly/CPREBedsA6M1





Photo Competition

Our spring photo competition asked for photos of Bedfordshire's wildlife from doorstep to the downs.

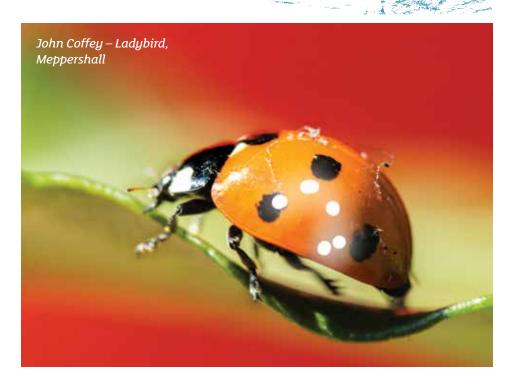
The winning photo features on the cover and was taken by Tony Pay.

"I have been taking wildlife photos for about the last six or seven years and I get a tremendous amount of enjoyment of getting that special picture. I took this photo just outside Riseley, the weather was good with a cloud free sky this allowed me to increase the shutter speed to catch more detail on the Red Kite. I was in my van one lunchtime and I saw the birds flying quite low, my van acted as a hide and this allowed me to get that bit closer, I still needed a 100-400mm lens though. I first saw these amazing birds nearly twenty years ago in mid Wales and I am so pleased they are becoming settled in this part of the country. I feel we are very lucky around Riseley to have a diverse range of wildlife from deer to three different types of owl which can either be seen or heard early in the mornings or on a summer evening."

We received lots of entries which featured a whole range of Bedfordshire's wildlife – from deer at Woburn to urban birds, wildflowers to butterflies. We can only include a few of our favourites here but watch our Instagram account for more of the amazing entries.

Photo opportunities available!

If you are interested in photography then you could join our team of Volunteer Photographers. See back page for details.



Local Plans Update

Examination in Public

As we go to press, the new Local Plans of both Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council are currently being examined in Public by Inspectors. This is the opportunity for those people and organisations that have made representations to the Local Authorities during the consultation stage to voice their concerns (or approval) of policies within the Local Plans to government appointed Inspectors, at hearings open to the public.

CPRE Bedfordshire's planning volunteers are attending those hearings which cover the matters of most importance to us and our members. Our objective is the protection of the Bedfordshire countryside and urban green spaces whilst recognising that the housing needs of local people must be met.

The protection of the open countryside is even more important now when set against a background of climate change and catastrophic biodiversity loss – "business as usual" which is what these Local Plans represent is no longer an option.

Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030

Of concern to CPRE Bedfordshire is the manner in which the hearings have been organised by the Planning Inspectorate. Information was sent to Town & Parish Councils during the Local Election period and Week 1 of the Hearings held over the half term bank holiday. It has meant that on several important days, the hearings have been held with only land owners/developers and their representatives present and very limited or no representation at all from Town & Parish Councils or local residents. We have made our serious concerns known to the Inspectors both in writing and verbally at the hearings.

Due to questions asked by CPRE
Bedfordshire, BBC have been forced to
release information that shows they
are planning a massive oversupply of
land for around 1,000 new homes. In
addition, the developer of the proposed
new village on the Stewartby old
brickworks brownfield site, which we
approve of, has stated that it can build
700 homes on the site within the Plan
period. This is 600 more homes than BBC
included in their plan.

This confirms CPRE's view, stated from the outset, that this brownfield site could and should be built out more quickly. All this means that in total BBC are holding reserves of around 1,600 homes and the associated land. This is hugely excessive and we want see a substantial reduction in BBC's Local Plan allocation of 2,000 new homes to the Key Rural Service Villages of Bromham, Great Barford, Sharnbrook and Clapham.

These are massive numbers for these communities to absorb sustainably – it would increase the size of Sharnbrook and Great Barford by 50% for example. The adverse impact on local hard and soft infrastructure will be unacceptable.

All of these homes will be built on greenfield sites leading to further biodiversity loss and they have no sustainable transport infrastructure while the Stewartby site has a railway line and a station and can offer massive biodiversity gain.

Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan 2035

Of most concern to us is the huge scale of housing development proposed overall which is far in excess of local need.

Massive development is proposed in the Green Belt and open countryside.

To date some of the issues we have raised are:

- our concerns over the lack of development at HRN1 (see page 11). We have stated that urgent building on this site would mean that development of greenfield sites elsewhere in Central Bedfordshire could be substantially reduced.
- CPRE Bedfordshire joined with the Chilterns AONB Board, The Chilterns Society, Natural England, Luton Borough Council and others in forcefully objecting to the proposed A6-M1 Link Road (see page 4)
- commented on the huge scale of unjustified development proposed for the Marston Vale (new town of 5,000 homes).
- urged that the review proposed by CBC of their Local Plan after it has been approved, which would include a further 20,000 homes, should be removed from the Local Plan.
- supported CBC's objective that all new housing developments should include 30% affordable homes.

The manner in which CBC's Local Plan has been prepared without a proper evidence base has been highlighted by the Inspectors. The fact that 2 senior members of CBC's Planning Policy Team resigned from the council prior to the plan hearings and left during them is, in our view, an indication that all is not as it should be at the council. Something that we have been commenting on for quite some time.

Branch News

Mary goes to the palace

We were delighted when Mary Walsh of CPRE Bedfordshire was selected to represent CPRE Volunteers at the Queen's Garden Party in May. Gerry Sansom, Chair of CPRE Bedfordshire said "Everyone was absolutely delighted to hear that Mary has been chosen to attend the Queen's Garden Party – no one could deserve it more! Mary has been a Trustee of CPRE Bedfordshire for the last 4 years but she doesn't just attend the bi-monthly Trustee Meetings. She is a very "hands on" person and has also taken on the very important role of Planning Volunteer working across the Central Bedfordshire local authority area

Mary's planning knowledge is extensive. She works tirelessly and with total professionalism to support branch members, town & parish councils and local action groups who hold her in great esteem. She is the embodiment of the CPRE ethos in her community.

Nothing is ever too much trouble for Mary - she is always at the call of local groups who need advice and support, helping them to defend their local countryside from unsustainable development. Mary is always happy to help and is a fantastic ambassador for the charity."

Mary attended the garden party with her husband.



AGM

The CPRE Bedfordshire AGM was held in April at Clifton Community Centre.

After the business side of the meeting, Gerry Sansom, Chair of CPRE Bedfordshire, shared some highlights from 2018 including the Living Countryside Awards and updates on local planning issues. He spoke about the way that CPRE Bedfordshire works with other local groups and a new focus on making sure that developers deliver on promises to provide affordable and social housing.





Crispin Truman, Chief Executive of National CPRE, then gave an engaging presentation on the future of CPRE - outlining the new strategy and took a number of questions from the floor on topics from the benefits of the countryside on mental health to engaging a new generation of supporters by thinking about how we talk about climate change.

Sign up and win!

Sign up to receive our new email newsletter at bit.ly/ CPREBedsNews by 31st August to be in with a chance of winning a great prize.

Attracting bees, butterflies and other pollinators

A guest column by Jayne Anthony

Pollinators are invertebrates that are responsible for the reproduction of flowering plants, including fruit and vegetable crops, but many are in drastic decline. This could cause major problems in the future as crops need to be pollinated in order to provide us with the food on our tables. A drastic reduction in numbers could mean that food becomes more expensive as growers find it harder to grow crops on the current scale.

They also help plants to produce fruits and seeds which birds and other animals rely on, so creating the healthy ecosystems that are vital to all life on earth.

Some of the reasons for the decline in numbers are:

- Habitat loss from intensive farming and urbanisation
- · Pests and diseases
- Extreme weather
- · Competition from invasive species
- · Climate changes
- Use of pesticides

But in our increasing urbanised world, private gardens are a valuable habitat for wildlife and we can help to increase numbers by the choices we make in what we do with our outdoor space.

- Choose nectar and pollen-rich plants - look for the Plants for Pollinators logo on plant labels.
- Grow a range of flowering plants to provide pollen and nectar year round. They don't necessarily need to be native plants. Having something in flower all year is more important. Remember to include plants that provide early and



late sources of nectar and pollen such as crocus, winter-flowering honeysuckle, sarcococca, dahlias and ivy.

- Avoid flowers that are 'doubles', these are bred to look pretty but often lack accessible pollen and nectar.
- Crops in the veg garden can also be useful. Tomatoes, beans and courgettes need pollinators to set fruit. Allow some crops to flower and set seed e.g. rocket, lettuce, parsnip, leek, onion and cabbage.
- Allow a few nettles to grow. Some butterflies like to lay their eggs on nettles in full sun. Regardless of how many flowers we put in our gardens, without the breeding grounds, the butterfly numbers will fail to increase.
- Leave some of your lawn long for as long as possible and allow some of the lawn 'weeds' to flower. Plants like dandelion and clover flowers are great for bees.

- Bees need a lot of flowers in one place as searching too far for enough food saps their energy.
 Plant pollen-rich shrubs and trees that will be able to grow large enough to produce many flowers.
 Fruit trees are particularly good.
- Provide water. This is not only vital for birds but for the bees and wasps to drink from as well. A plant saucer will do the job as well as a commercial bird bath.
- Do not use pesticides in the garden as these will harm beneficial insects as well as the pests. Choosing the right plant for the right place and having good garden hygiene can help to reduce pests. Look for natural or preventative methods of protecting your plants such as garlic sprays and biological controls.

www.jayneanthonygardendesign.co.uk

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet

On 7th June 2019 Highways
England announced a
consultation on their preferred
route for the new dual
carriageway on the section of the
A428 between the Black Cat and
Caxton Gibbet roundabouts.

The consultation runs to 28th July and members of the public are invited to provide feedback on the proposals for the scheme, including:

- · Detailed alignment of the route
- Junction designs
- Enhanced routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- · Plans for environmental mitigation

The proposed route is shown in orange on the map below. After leaving the Black Cat roundabout the proposed scheme includes two junctions; one where the new road meets the existing

A428 east of St Neots and a second junction where it meets the A1198 at Caxton Gibbet.

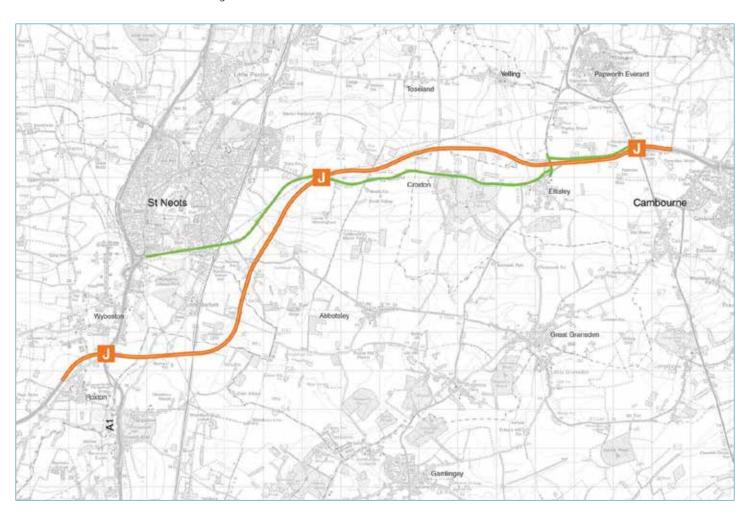
CPRE Bedfordshire are working with CPRE Cambridgeshire & Peterborough to develop a joint response to the consultation. Our initial thoughts are that we should reiterate our original concerns that many studies have shown that new road schemes are often unsuccessful in providing answers to the problems they were intended to solve. In addition road building encourages car-dependent land development and ribbon development such as housing, business parks and out of town retail parks along transport corridors in the countryside leading to a semi-industrial urban landscape where there used to be countryside.

Whilst we still have these serious reservations about road schemes of this kind, at least the preferred route

chosen was the one we identified as the 'least worst' of the routes put forward for consultation in 2107.

We are taking a close look at specific aspects of the way that Highways England are delivering the route in Bedfordshire so that we can comment on their aspirations to;

- maintain existing levels of biodiversity,
- have a beneficial impact on air quality and noise levels in the surrounding area,
- ensure the safety of cyclists, walkers, horse riders and those who use public transport,
- minimise impacts to road users and the surrounding community during the construction phase



Local spotlight – Made in Bedford

Made in Bedford is a new ecocafé and shop on St Paul's Square in Bedford. Their Fairtrade coffee comes from local coffee roasters Wooden Hill Coffee Company (who won a CPRE Mark at our 2018 Living Countryside Awards) and their food is made from local ingredients. They also sell art, gifts and homewares from a talented collective of local artists and makers.

We spoke to Rachel from Made in Bedford who explained that there are five main elements of sustainability which are the cornerstones of the enterprise.

- 1. The promotion of local artists and craftspeople to encourage consumers to buy products created/ designed in Bedfordshire. This cuts transport miles and boosts local small creative businesses.
- 2. The use of locally produced/ sourced ingredients in the cafe wherever possible and creating food in our own kitchen.

- 3. Recycle/re-use. We recycle packaging and compost kitchen waste. Most of the cafe crockery and other equipment was bought in charity shops. All the cafe fittings are made from recycled wood.
- 4. No single use plastic. Our cups/ lids and all other disposables are made from fully compostable/ biodegradable materials. Our greetings cards are sold in cornstarch wraps.
- 5. **Vegan.** Our lunch menu is totally vegan.

Give us your suggestions!

Get in touch with your suggestions for local enterprises, producers or projects that you think CPRE Bedfordshire should feature in future editions

email us at: info@cprebeds. org.uk





More information online at: www.madeinbedford.uk

Our Chair recommends:

It's all about soils!

Paper 3 in CPRE's excellent "Food & Farming Foresight" series which seeks to encourage discussion on the future shape of farming, focuses on what supports all our agriculture – soil – and how maintaining its health underpins our own.

The paper explores why soils are important and their main functions. It looks at the key threats they face.

It also analyses why soils must be better protected in the future to secure the domestic food supply, reduce risks of



climate change, improve water quality and restore the health of the natural environment.

This really informative and easy to read paper includes some good practice case studies – one is Weston Park Farms near Stevenage.

"The thin layer of soil covering the earth's surface represents the difference between survival and extinction for most terrestrial life" Doran & Parkin 1994

Paper 3 "Back to the land: rethinking our approach to soil" can be found at www.cpre.org.uk/resources/ farming-and-food/farming/item/5013-back-to-the-landrethinking-our-approach-to-soil



The Scandal of Houghton Regis North Site1 (HRN1)

Have developers paid the £44m due to the public for the new roads?

Just 10% affordable housing agreed!

HRN1 – Planning permission for 5,150 homes given in 2014. The biggest site for housing development anywhere in Bedfordshire and one of the largest single sites in the UK.

To facilitate the development, £200m of public money invested in 2 new roads opened in 2017 – the A5-M1 Link Road and the Woodside Link Road.

To date not a single brick laid – homes for 5,000 families inexcusably delayed!

To help finance the new roads, a deal was signed between the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Consortium behind the HRN1 development.

This S278 Agreement, of which CPRE Bedfordshire has a copy, required the Consortium to pay £44m towards the cost of the new roads (£200m) – payment was due when the roads were completed.

CPRE Bedfordshire has submitted a Freedom of Information request to the DfT asking them to confirm that the £44m has been paid and if not when they expect to receive the payment.

The DfT has refused to answer our FOI request, saying that they have no knowledge of the payment and that it is now in the hands of Highways England.

This is very strange, £44m is a considerable sum of money due to the "public purse".

The DfT response indicates to us that perhaps all is not as it should be – we question whether the £44m has indeed been paid.

If it has been paid, why would the Consortium delay the construction of new homes?

Financial good practice would normally require a developer to build and sell the new homes as quickly as possible in order to make profits to recover the £44m they had spent on the new roads. The reverse has been the case. The Consortium has done everything it can to delay construction.

Delays to building out HRN1 have meant that huge areas of additional open countryside have had to be allocated to developers for building land by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) in order to compensate for houses not built at HRN1.

Furthermore, CBC confirmed to the Inspector at their Local Plan Public Examination currently underway, that because the Consortium agreed to pay £44m towards new roads, the number of affordable homes they are obliged to build has been reduced to just 10% compared to the 30% that CBC expects from all other developments.

The deal for just 10% affordable homes is apparently part of a very complicated and unusual agreement that allows either, that the % of affordable homes is increased depending on the increased value of the land or, that an equivalent sum of money is paid to CBC.

We understand that members of the HRN1 Consortium include AVIVA and the Diocese of St Albans.

Volunteerwith CPRE Bedfordshire

Love the Bedfordshire countryside and green spaces? Can you spare some time to help keep it safe?

Being part of our volunteering team, develop skills, and know that you're helping a great cause are just three great reasons to volunteer.

We currently have the following opportunities available (full role descriptions can be downloaded from our website) or give us a call!

Volunteer Photographers – help us celebrate special places in Bedfordshire – whether that's a beautiful landscape or wonderful wildlife – and promote our valuable work

Event Volunteers - join our new event team to help promote the work of CPRE Bedfordshire and raise awareness of important issues such as climate change, affordable housing, waste reduction and preserving the Bedfordshire countryside.



Topic Leaders - we are recruiting
Topic Leaders to expand our team
of volunteers who have specialist
knowledge on the topics that CPRE
promotes and works on. Some key
topics are:- Plastics, Waste reduction,
Recycling, Biodiversity, Climate Change,
Soil, Local Foods, Affordable Housing,
Litter, Education / Working With Schools.

Planning Volunteers - join our team who respond to planning applications that impact our green spaces and rural communities. Planning volunteers engage with the local planning system and campaign on local planning issues to influence how Bedfordshire's countryside and rural communities are developed.

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 <code>lois.wright@cprebeds.org.uk</code> or phone on <code>01234 880624</code> (office is open most Mondays and Thursdays, otherwise please leave a message and we'll return your call)

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



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