



# Bedfordshire Matters



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## Chair's column

Martin Christopher



Countryside lovers have an interesting dilemma to resolve: how to reconcile our desire for a flourishing, biodiverse natural environment with the nation's need for food security.

Food security is an issue of growing concern. There is an increased awareness of the fragility of the UK's food supply chain. As a result of a 'perfect storm' of several interconnected and simultaneously occurring events we are starting to witness rising prices and potential shortages on retailers' shelves. Climate change, Brexit, and war in Ukraine have all contributed in different ways to this situation. A further factor adding to the vulnerability of our food supply chains is our increased dependence on imported products.

Over the years, farming in the UK has become more intensive with a focus on constantly improving the yield per hectare leading to an impressive increase in agricultural productivity. However, this so-called 'green revolution' has come at a price: greater use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides alongside the creation of 'prairie farms' through the amalgamation of fields and the destruction of hedgerows, woodlands and ponds. Some commentators have suggested that if we carry on in this way the number of future harvests that we have left may be frighteningly few because of depleted and degraded farmland.

With a growing population to feed and the need to reduce our reliance on

imported food, how can agricultural output be sustained whilst at the same time protecting the countryside and improving biodiversity?

One possible way forward is what some have termed 'regenerative farming'. Regenerative farming or agriculture focuses on soil improvement and conservation, improving and conserving water and an enhancement of the wider eco-system through encouraging biodiversity. In the process of achieving these objectives there is also the potential for climate change mitigation through biosequestration i.e. capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through appropriate planting and the restoration of grassland and woodland.

The good news is that these ideas and practices are now being accepted by a growing number of agricultural enterprises and food production businesses. For those wanting to learn more about what can be achieved through regenerative farming, a recent book authored by one of the UK's pioneers in this field, Jake Fiennes, is well worth reading. Appropriately his book is titled: "Land Healer: How Farming Can Save Britain's Countryside". CPRE has also recently produced a report on food security and the pressures on the landscape. (See page 9) Hopefully we might be about to witness another green revolution, but this time one based not on chemicals but on nature.

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

Cover photo by Pavithra Reddy - see page 6 for more from our 2022 photo competition



Wildflower workshop

## Wildflower workshop supports local communities

In recent years, wildflower meadows have become more popular. Keen to improve biodiversity many communities, local groups and town and parish councils have attempted to develop unused ground into beautiful wildflower areas.

Sadly, not many are outstanding in their field for whilst it may seem a simple task, developing areas that are attractive and sustainable is a challenge. It is not just a case of spreading some seed and letting it grow, year after year.

**“It was good to be able to illustrate the subject by visiting local sites where there are very different conditions.”**

CPRE Bedfordshire held two sessions of a wildflower workshop in June, which aimed to bust some of the myths and provide down to earth information and advice on how to establish a meadow and maintain it so that it flourishes.

**“Pat’s friendly manner and his knowledge in answering our questions was excellent. The best course I have been on.”**

The workshop was attended by a diverse mix of people from parish councils, local community groups, landowners and businesses. Led by Pat Knight the workshop was set in Oakley, a parish that really is outstanding when it comes to wildflower meadows. For a small village it boasts two stunning sites – Linch Furlong and Riverside – which made the ideal setting for the workshop and provided a great example of what can be done with good management.

Pat’s knowledge and enthusiasm was well received, and he answered numerous questions from the group about seed collection, mowing, plant types and much more.

Bringing together a group of people in such a lovely setting was a pleasure.

To see them connect and share ideas was inspiring and many are keen to meet up again. This workshop has certainly sown the seed for some great ideas and we look forward to seeing them grow!

**“I enjoyed meeting other people interested in wildflower meadows and to discuss ideas.”**

**CPRE Bedfordshire are now considering how we can support this group and encourage others to get involved in establishing wildflower meadows. Watch this space!**



# Taking action for hedgehogs in Flitwick

Hedgehogs are a much-loved species but they are also under threat. They were classed as 'vulnerable to extinction' on the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) Red List in 2020. The hedgehog is an indicator species, which means that a decline in hedgehog numbers also indicates a decline in the quality of our environment and the health of the natural world. They are a key part of the ecosystem, feeding mainly on invertebrates such as slugs, earthworms and beetles.

Hedgehogs are in decline for three main reasons:- intensification of agriculture, which has reduced the quantity and quality of hedgehog habitats as well as the availability of food, roadkill and predation. Hedgehogs are increasingly showing a preference for more urban areas so understanding more about how they live in them is important. A project in Flitwick aimed to do just that, while also promoting hedgehog friendly actions and bringing the community together through citizen science and a love of nature.

The 'Flitwick – A Hedgehog-Friendly Town' campaign is based on an excellent piece of research led by Helena Buras and Alison



Burr, supported by volunteers from across the town. The final research report provided evidence that a hedgehog population exists in the town and requested that Central Bedfordshire Council erect wildlife slow road signage in Flitwick. The report used data gathered by residents to find hotspots of hedgehog sightings to help suggest the best places for the signage. They also discussed how the signage could improve Flitwick's identity and visibility and how it could benefit residents and wildlife.

In total, there were 616 hedgehog sightings reported over the survey period (June to November 2021) in over 100 locations in Flitwick. This shows a town wide thriving population of

hedgehogs. Residents recorded where they saw hedgehogs, at what time of day and their condition (healthy, ill or injured, or dead) and approximate size. They also mapped hedgehog friendly measures being taken by residents such as providing fresh water and access to gardens via hedgehog highways.

CPRE Bedfordshire is delighted to provide a new home for the report and we hope to be able to help with the process of getting the signage erected. We're also looking at how we might use the research to help other communities who want to run similar projects. Watch this space!

## Top tips for a hedgehog friendly garden

- Provide fresh drinking water
- Provide hedgehog highways (e.g. hole in fence, gate or wall)
- Don't use pesticides
- Check long grass before using a strimmer or mower
- Provide a ramp or escape route from ponds
- Leave a log pile
- Encourage insects into the garden
- Put appropriate food out regularly

Find out more about how to help hedgehogs at

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/>

Did you know that hedgehogs (as their name suggests!) prefer to live in hedges? Hedgerows are an essential part of the UK ecosystem providing natural drainage, improving soil quality and capturing carbon, contributing to reversing the effects of climate change. CPRE are big fans of hedgerows and you can read more about the current campaign to increase hedgerow cover by 40% by 2050 at <https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/nature-and-landscapes/hedgerows/>

## Is this the end of the line for East West Rail?

**CPRE Bedfordshire have been continuing to support the BFARe (Bedford for a Reconsultation) campaign in their efforts to persuade East West Rail Company (EWR Co) to reopen consultation on the EWR Co's choice of Route E as the preferred route.**

CPRE Bedfordshire support the proposal to develop the EWR railway and recognise the many environmental benefits, especially the potential to relieve pressures on the local road network, that it would bring.

Following consultation in 2019, EWR Co announced their preferred route for the railway in January 2020. In Bedford Borough the chosen route runs across an area of quiet countryside and rural villages in the north of the Borough. CPRE Bedfordshire had expressed a strong preference in the initial consultation for a route running south of Bedford that could closely follow the transport corridor alongside the A421 corridor. An area that is already highly developed for commercial activity.

BFARe's campaign asserts that the initial consultation process was flawed, and in Bedford, awareness of the consultation in the areas affected by the new railway was limited by poor communication with the communities most affected. They also share CPRE Bedfordshire's concerns about the negative aspects of Route E and the advantages of an alternative southern route.

Activity in recent months has been focussed mainly on the consultation process of March – June 2021 in response to the EWR document 'Making Meaningful Connections' published in March 2021. The consultation document sets out details of how the EWR line would be built and asked communities, local representatives and stakeholders to give EWR Co their comments and thoughts on their developing plans for the railway.

There was nothing new in the document that served to meet any of our concerns. Campaigning activity has centred on spreading awareness of the proposals and highlighting the many weaknesses and threats these proposals pose for local people and the countryside. The publication of the document brought new information to light about demolition of houses in the town centre (for example in the Poets area) and rural villages. Engagement with EWR Co by BFARe revealed an absence of detail about costs and how the railway would meet its net zero ambitions. EWR Co have still not published the business case for the project. According to one of our contacts in the railway industry this is highly unusual for a project of such significance, and at this stage, indicative of a serious lack of focus and grip by EWR Co.

Meanwhile, the opportunity to reconsider the route choice and switch attention from the currently proposed

northern route in Bedford, to a southern route, is currently threatened by progress on the development of a new station at Wixams. As far as we understand, the location of this station has been identified with other priorities in mind and would not be suitable to operate as an EWR station interchange with Midland Main Line and Thameslink. CPRE Bedfordshire has urged EWR Co to intervene in this development and ask for the project to be paused so that alternatives could be considered that would serve the needs of EWR as well as the residents of Wixams.

Announcements on the outcome of the latest consultation were expected in the Spring but have apparently been delayed. In March, EWR Co announced the appointment of Beth West as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from 1 April 2022 following the resignation of the previous post-holder. Since coming into post Beth has engaged positively with BFARe and sponsored a number of public engagement events aimed at providing more information about EWR for the communities most affected.

Meanwhile, the election process for the new leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister produced a bombshell announcement by Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport. In an interview with LBC Radio in the early stages of the contest, when he was in the running for the leadership, he stated that if he became Prime Minister he would scrap EWR and save £3.5b!!

What the future holds for EWR has therefore been thrown into doubt – who knows what might happen next!?



## Photo competition

In the spring we ran a photography competition. Our theme was 'plants and people' and we asked to see your photos of people engaging with Bedfordshire's varied plant life.

The winning entry can be seen on the front cover and was taken by Pavithra Reddy (aged 13) in Clapham Woods.



Eve McGrath – Bedford Park

Harriet Whitlock-James. – Bluebell Woods, Clapham

## CPRE Bedfordshire AGM & talk

Lots of CPRE Bedfordshire members joined us for our AGM in April. The event was held in Flitwick Village Hall and we were joined by members of two local action groups who were able to talk to members about their campaigns. The talk came from John Strutt who outlined the aims and objectives of the Bedfordshire Great Ouse Valley Environmental Trust, how it will relate to other environmental charities and their plans for community science led projects and greater protections for the Great Ouse.



River Great Ouse at Oakley

# Living Countryside awards 2023

It doesn't seem that long ago that we were celebrating the 2021 awards and here we are planning the next ones!

The Living Countryside Awards celebrate and recognise the people and projects that are benefiting our county's rural environment and urban green spaces. Previous winners have included voluntary and community groups, schools and businesses from across Bedfordshire.

"Our family were delighted and proud to win the Made in Bedfordshire award. The win raised awareness of the work we are doing moving to a sustainable way of farming." Riverside Dairy (2021)

"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." Bletsoe Lady Smockers (2018)

The 2021 awards were a great success despite the challenges of Covid and are now being replicated by CPRES in other areas of the country. Building on the success of last year, we will be keeping the Bedfordshire's Choice Award and giving the public a chance to vote for their favourite project. The "Made in Bedfordshire" category will also be staying to help showcase

producers and makers from around the county. Other categories will be announced in the next few months so watch out for more information.

To ensure the awards run smoothly we will be recruiting volunteers including judges, event management and project admin. We will also be looking for sponsors for the different categories and a venue for the awards presentation. If you can help in any way, please get in touch.

For more information on last year's awards go to <https://www.cprebeds.org.uk/discover/results2021/>



↑ Riverside Dairy



↑ Penrose Roots

← Re-Phil's Zero Waste Shop

# Planning explained: windfall sites

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines windfall sites as “Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously developed sites that have unexpectedly become available”.

The NPPF also says that “local planning authorities may make an allowance for windfall sites in the five year supply if they have compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area and will continue to provide a reliable source of supply.” However, most houses built on windfall sites do not count towards the housing totals put forward in the Local Plan.

## Windfall and Central Bedfordshire Council

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) say that windfall sites “tend to be very

small sites for one or a small number of homes.” \*

There are 233 houses built into the current CBC Local Plan. In other words, up to 233 homes built on windfall sites will be counted against CBC’s total of required homes in the Local Plan.

## An example site in Central Bedfordshire

The planned crematorium at Flitwick is on a windfall site. The site had not been allocated for development in CBC’s Local Plan. The site is also within the Green Belt and there are



Planned crematorium at Flitwick

no Very Special Circumstances to justify development.

CPRE Bedfordshire’s planning team actively monitor windfall sites.

Read more about this story on our website <https://www.cprebeds.org.uk/news/cpre-bedfordshire-requests-crematorium-call-in/>

\*[https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory\\_record/1298/windfall\\_site%20ref](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/directory_record/1298/windfall_site%20ref)

# Understanding planning

## A workshop to unravel the mysteries of the planning system.

Planning can be complicated. From a whole host of acronyms to terms, laws and processes it is a lot to get your head around. When you just want the best for your community it can feel daunting to deal with the planning system.

At CPRE Bedfordshire we work hard to support local communities and parishes to make sense of planning and to ensure local people can have a say in what happens to their environment. Our previous planning workshops have been popular and well received, so this November we will be running a workshop “Understanding Planning” aimed at town and parish councils and other local groups that may be interested.

This will include an overview of what is happening nationally in planning and how it will impact locally (and may

include more on the planning reforms) from one of our experts at National CPRE. Our local team will look at what is happening in Bedfordshire including Local Plans and major issues. The afternoon will focus on the practical aspects of planning and we will guide you through the process of writing and submitting an objection to a planning application.

We are currently finalising all the details and will share these a.s.a.p. In the meantime, if you are interested in joining the workshop, please email [lois.wright@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:lois.wright@cprebeds.org.uk)







## How is agricultural land classified?

The 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) agricultural land classification is given to the agricultural land that is regarded as the most valuable in terms of its food producing potential. BMV land was first identified and classified in response to the demand for self-sufficiency following the Second World War. Land is identified as BMV (either Grade 1, 2 or 3a; there are six grades altogether) using the Agricultural Land Classification. The mapping of agricultural land is maintained by Natural England.

- **Grade 1:** Excellent quality agricultural land — land with no (or very minor) limitations and high and less variable yields. A very wide range of agricultural crops can be grown, such as apples and pears, salad crops, soft fruit, and winter harvested vegetables.
- **Grade 2:** Very good quality agricultural land — land with minor limitations that affect crop yields, cultivations or harvesting. Generally high yielding land but may be lower or more variable than Grade 1.
- **Grade 3a:** Good quality agricultural land — land that can consistently produce moderate to high yields of a reduced variety of arable crops, such as cereals, sugar beet and potatoes.
- **Grade 3b:** Moderate quality agricultural land — capable of producing moderate yields.

The East of England has lost 3,232 ha of BMV land since 2010 — the greatest absolute loss within a single region.

- **Grade 4:** Poor quality agricultural land — land with severe limitations.
- **Grade 5:** Very poor quality agricultural land — land with very severe limitations.

The process of grading agricultural land requires assessing factors that affect the site and its interactions, including: climate, aspect, gradient and soil. Crucially, the classification of BMV land does not consider the current agricultural use of the land, instead basing its grade on its inherent potential.

## Food security

In July National CPRE launched an important new report calling for a land strategy and new planning rules to safeguard our food security. They found that almost 14,500 hectares of the country's best agricultural land, which could grow at least 250,000 tonnes of vegetables a year, has been permanently lost to development in just 12 years.

The research also revealed that an increased risk of severe flooding caused by climate change will further challenge our food security. More than 200,000 hectares – or 60% – of England's finest Grade 1 agricultural land is within areas at the highest risk of flooding. This is because our most productive farmland is disproportionately close to river and coastal flood plains, with 75% of the best quality land in the East Midlands and 95% in the East of England at the highest risk level.

It also argues that there is enough previously developed 'brownfield' land to provide 1.2 million homes, and south-facing rooftops that could meet much of our energy needs, so we have a chance to tackle the climate, housing and cost-of-living crises without sacrificing farmland.

Download the full report <https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Building-on-our-food-security.pdf>



Annie organised the Save Our Greenfields Walk in February 2022

## WI Climate Ambassadors

Like CPRE, the Women's Institute (WI) have a proud history of taking action to protect the environment and both are members of the Climate Coalition. We invited Annie Palmer to talk about her role as a Climate Change Ambassador and the important work she is doing in Bedfordshire.

Hi! My name is Annie Palmer and I'm a Climate Ambassador (CA) for Shillington Women's Institute. The WI Climate Ambassador scheme was founded in 2016 and there are now over four hundred Climate Ambassadors.

In January 2019 I went along to a WI meeting as a guest and became a member in March, receiving my first issue of WLife (the National Magazine

of the WI) soon afterwards. Under the heading of 'Campaigns', there was a notice about The Time is Now mass lobby for climate and environmental action in Westminster that June. It was good to read that the WI were very involved with environmental issues as it's something I'm passionate about. I registered my interest in the lobby and the National Federation of Women's Institute (NFWI) made me feel most welcome, giving me all the details that I needed. I had a good day in London, meeting many lovely people, and became a CA after this.

CAs represent their federation and campaign in their local communities about the impact of climate change. They take part in actions such as

protest walks and lobbies and communicate with MPs and local councillors. Some give talks to WIs while others organise stalls at village fairs, in market squares etc., to inform people/share information about what, as an individual, we can do to fight climate change.

CAs receive regular newsletters from National Federation of Women's Institute (NFWI) Public Affairs, which keep them informed about WI (and other environmental organisations) campaigns. CAs are kept abreast of environmental and climate reports such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report 'Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaption and Vulnerability'. They get

requests to write to their MPs about various issues – a recent one was the Policing Bill, which could make it harder for WI members to gather in groups to protest or call for change. CAs pass information/requests on to their federation members.

Last November, Nicky Amos (Chair of NFWI Public Affairs) and her team had a stand at COP26 in Glasgow. They called for strong action on climate change. Nicky spoke for us all when she said, at a CA zoom meeting last August, that “we are not seeing the leadership we need to see from Government”.

With regard to the climate and ecological crisis, I particularly focus on saving the countryside from profiteering developers and their concrete. As my Gran (born 1889) always said: “you look after the countryside because it looks after you; destroy it and you destroy yourself”. She had vision and wisdom.

Bedfordshire has just two CAs at present – we are hoping that, especially as the county is being covered in concrete, more will join us. That would be so good! Ann Jones, NFWI Chair, said in WILife (April 2022) that she had met a lot of WI Climate

Ambassadors over the years. “They’re all passionate and keen to learn; they investigate and work together, and that’s what makes them stronger”. All the CAs that I have met have been an inspiration.

For more information on the WI and to find your local group  
[www.thewi.org.uk](http://www.thewi.org.uk)  
[www.theclimatecoalition.org](http://www.theclimatecoalition.org)

## Chicken Broiler ruffles feathers!

We are pleased to see that a planning application submitted by Bedfordia Ltd for a massive new factory, which will intensively raise 2.4 million broiler chickens per year received 2446 objections.

The site is near to the north Bedfordshire hamlet of Knotting on the Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire border, and has led to concerns that the River Great Ouse in Bedfordshire may be threatened by increasing pollution.

CPRE Bedfordshire has objected to the planning application, which is currently being considered

by North Northamptonshire Council (East Northants District).

One of our major concerns relates to Bedfordia’s plans to spread the enormous amount of chicken manure generated by the factory (estimated to be around 3,500 tonnes/year) over fields along the valley area of the River Great Ouse in North Bedfordshire and in the valleys of tributaries feeding the Ouse.

We will be watching closely to see the outcome of this application.



Intensive Chicken farming

# Save Steppingley Road Field

CPRE Bedfordshire is supporting a Local Action Group campaigning to save the field next to Flitwick Wood / Steppingley Road from development. This group of residents are passionate about the field and area around it, and despite it being an allocated site in the Local Plan, they feel strongly that they must try and save it from development. The footpaths around the field are well used each day and provide an easy way for people to connect with the nature on their doorstep. For many it is also a way to meet other people and there is a strong sense of community amongst those who use this space and a lot of support for the campaign.

Here, we take a closer look at the area surrounding the site and tell its story through the centuries.

## Roman

Roman artefacts have been found in the area dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries including pottery and a fire box that was used to burn charcoal or other fuel for cooking, heating or rituals. The possible line of a Roman road lies to the south and south-east of the site.

## Medieval

By the medieval period the land was being used for agriculture. Nearby Flitwick Wood, ancient semi-natural woodland, formed its present shape by around 1300.



## Early modern

A former clay-pit and kilns, dating from around 1690, have been found nearby. Like much of the local area, the geology of this part of Bedfordshire lent itself to brick making.

## An eighteenth-century murder

Joseph Cooke, a baker in Steppingley, was prosecuted at the Lent Assizes of 1789. He was charged with the murder of Elizabeth White, a single woman of about twenty-five, who lived in Ampthill. Her body was found in the riding in Flitwick Wood. The Northampton Mercury reported Elizabeth's murder in its edition of 13 December 1788, suggesting that Elizabeth went to meet Cooke in order to blackmail him about their relationship. Cooke was hanged for the crime in March 1789.

## Nineteenth century

Close by to the north of the field lies the site of a former smock mill built in the 19th century and destroyed by fire in 1903. A smock mill is a type of windmill that consists of a sloping, horizontally weatherboarded, thatched, or shingled tower, usually with six or eight sides. It is topped with a roof or cap that rotates to bring the sails into the wind. It gets its name from its resemblance to smocks worn by farmers in an earlier period.

## The Second World War

On the 24th February 1945 two Mosquito aircrew were killed when their aircraft crashed into a field between Flitwick and Steppingley. During the Second World War aircraft in the skies were a common sight due to the proximity of RAF Cranfield. However, on this occasion the plane

failed and eye witness reports spoke of a loud cracking sound, with the wreckage spread over a wide area. In November 2021 a memorial was unveiled, which sits in the gardens at the Rufus Centre in Flitwick.

## Modern Leisure

The John Bunyan Trail was created by the Bedfordshire Group of the Ramblers Association to celebrate their Diamond Jubilee and the walk is dedicated to the author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress'. The route takes in many places of historic interest connected with Bunyan and passes close to the site.

Nearby Flitwick Wood hosts a variety of circular walks and the main walk is wheelchair and pushchair friendly. The field itself is an important green space on the edge of Flitwick, connecting up a number of local walks.

## Wildlife

The field is home to a rich variety of wildlife including skylarks, deer, foxes, badgers and hares.

One small patch of land can help communities tell the story of their whole area, shedding light on how people have lived, worked and played. These are fragments of Steppingley Road's rich story.



# Great Big Green Week Event

Since its inception a few years ago, CPRE Bedfordshire have kept close links with the Ampthill Climate Change Group through their Chair Jayne Anthony who is also a CPRE member and supporter. We are delighted to see how the group has developed and that they have engaged local people in a range of initiatives from litter picking and wildflower planting to local walks and discussions.

As part of Great Big Green Week they will be running a Family Event at Parkside Hall on Sunday 2nd October 2022, 11am- 4pm. This includes a variety of children's activities, interesting stalls, ideas and advice on money saving sustainability choices, as well as various food and drink. Bring the kids along to meet the animals with Teaching Talons Animal Ambassadors and enjoy fun activities, crafts, and face painting – all for free!

We are pleased to see Living Countryside Award entrants Phil's Re-Phil and Wooden Hill Coffee will be there, along with Simply Bee Eco, Mamma TT Organics and more. There's information on home energy from the Heat Pump Federation, and sustainable gardening, plus Share:Flitwick and Ampthill, Plastic Free Ampthill and Central Bedfordshire Council Environment and Sustainability. Dr. Bike from Halfords will be offering bookable bike safety checks.

For more information take a look at their website [www.ampthillclimatechange.co.uk](http://www.ampthillclimatechange.co.uk)

**Join us at Ampthill's  
Family Event for  
THE GREAT  
BIG GREEN  
WEEK**

**Sunday 2nd October  
11am to 4pm  
At Parkside Hall, Woburn Street,  
Ampthill, MK45 2HX**

**Kids' Activities, Stalls,  
Food and Drink, Presentations,  
Money saving ideas**

Find out more at [www.ampthillclimatechange.co.uk](http://www.ampthillclimatechange.co.uk).  
Interested in being a stallholder? Email [hello@ampthillclimatechange.co.uk](mailto:hello@ampthillclimatechange.co.uk)

PLASTIC FREE AMPHILL SURFERS AGAINST SEWAGE  
AMPHILL TOWN COUNCIL  
Amphill Climate Change Group Every Action Counts.

## The Great Big Green Week

The Great Big Green Week is the UK's biggest ever celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. Between 24 September and 2 October this year, Great Big Green Week will unleash a wave of support for action to protect the planet. <https://greatbiggreenweek.com>

# So, what does a digital engagement officer actually do?

This is a question that our digital engagement officer, Shelly Dennison, often gets asked at CPRE Bedfordshire events. Here she shares some insights about her role.

## Social media

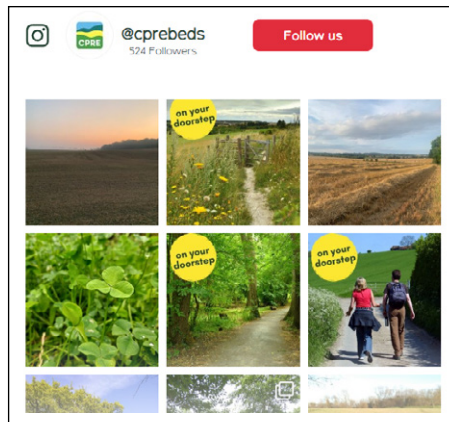
One of my key responsibilities is managing the CPRE Bedfordshire social media accounts. This isn't just scheduling and posting content but is also checking on the comments and seeing what's resonating with our followers. We also share content from other groups that we work with like local action groups or previous entrants from the Living Countryside Awards. I'll also create any graphics we want to use to illustrate a story.

## Website

Adding news and articles to the website and sourcing images is another part of my role. Our website uses a template provided by the web team at National CPRE who provide support whenever there is a technical problem to be solved.

## News

When it comes to the content of articles on our website I work closely with our trustees and planning volunteers because they are the experts on all things planning! Sometimes they will



draft the article and sometimes I will do the drafting based on information they have given me but it's a collaborative process to make sure what we post is accurate and accessible. Often it's about summarising consultation responses in a way that pulls out the most important facts so that readers can see at a glance what the issues are.

## Telling stories

Aside from the news items, there are lots of other kinds of content on our website. I really enjoy helping local action groups find new ways to tell people about their campaigns. The Save Steppingley Road Field feature (see pg 12) is a good example. The Living Countryside Awards are another great way of introducing projects to a wider audience.

## Discover our countryside

It's great to be able to share blogs from guest writers as well as write some of the pieces

for our blog. Researching and writing our walks and days out features is always fun and I hope they encourage more people to explore Bedfordshire's countryside and green spaces.

## What else?

I send out our monthly e-newsletter, which is a mix of news and features. There's monitoring to be done, which is how we see which stories on the website are proving popular or how many people we're reaching on Facebook. Digital engagement isn't done in a vacuum so I'm also involved with planning and strategy where the whole CPRE Bedfordshire team looks at what we want to concentrate on and when, as well as who we want to reach.

I've been with CPRE Bedfordshire for five years and it's an incredibly varied job. I can be turning a Local Plan consultation into a web feature one day and planning the content for this magazine the next - to sum up this week!

Facebook: @CPREBedfordshire

Twitter: @CPREBeds

Instagram: @cprebeds

Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter on our website (scroll to the bottom of the homepage for the link)



Golf Course at Great Denham

## Share your favourite local walk

CPRE Bedfordshire are building a resource of short local walks to help people explore the countryside and green spaces on their doorsteps.

We would like to invite our supporters to get involved and contribute a walk – it might be a walk you discovered during lockdown, an old favourite or one that highlights a green space under threat.

We're looking for walks that are short, simple and local to you.

All potential contributors will be given a leaflet with lots of guidance to help them write up their walk

If you'd like to know more please get in touch with our Digital Engagement Officer, Shelly Dennison, via [shelly.dennison@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:shelly.dennison@cprebeds.org.uk)

You can see an example at [cprebeds.org.uk/discover/discover-mowsbury-hillfort-and-putnoe-wood/](https://cprebeds.org.uk/discover/discover-mowsbury-hillfort-and-putnoe-wood/)

[cprebeds.org.uk/news/share-your-favourite-local-walk/](https://cprebeds.org.uk/news/share-your-favourite-local-walk/)

## Could you be a CPRE Bedfordshire Trustee?

We are currently looking for two new Trustees to join our team.

Joining our board is a fantastic way to help us champion environmental issues such as the climate emergency, renewable energy, biodiversity and sustainable transport. As a trustee you'll have an essential role in contributing towards the direction of our charity. Trustees also help to provide continuity, govern the charity and guide our future work.

We are keen to hear from people with knowledge related to the environment, biodiversity, climate change, farming, income generation, governance or IT.

We're passionate about making the countryside in Bedfordshire a better place for everyone to enjoy. If you share our passion and have the skills to help our small charity develop, we would love to hear from you! **Contact Lois. wright@cprebeds.org.uk for more information.**

CPRE Bedfordshire  
43 Bromham Road, Bedford MK40 2AA  
01234 880624  
[info@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:info@cprebeds.org.uk)  
[www.cprebeds.org.uk](http://www.cprebeds.org.uk)



The countryside charity  
**Bedfordshire**

Registered Charity No: 1023435