

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMER NEWSLETTER AND APPEAL

Dear Members

As your new Branch Chairman I have become rapidly aware of the hard work and enthusiasm shown by my Committee. I have also been given tremendous advice and support by Robin Bawtree our Director, and Linda and Jennifer in the Dorchester office. Given national and international economic conditions, CPRE has not been left unscathed, and a number of redundancies have been made recently at the London Office. Whilst this caused some discussion at the national AGM recently, National Office now faces the future with confidence and locally we can move forward with our Dorset campaigns to protect our countryside.

Whilst we have had a number of successes, we did lose the battle against the Weymouth Relief Road earlier in the year and those of you who drive frequently into Weymouth will have observed the scar on the landscape where the work is now quite advanced. However, our most successful recent campaign has been to defend the Green Belt in and around Bournemouth and Poole. There is little doubt that without the hard work of the local group of CPRE volunteers and our President working alongside local communities, this result would not have been achieved. But we do face other challenges, and for example there is still a threat to Dorchester where there are pro proposals to build 3000 new houses.

We have also been successful in defeating, with a very strong local group, a planning application for six massive wind turbines at Silton, near Gillingham. We are not against wind turbines full stop, but we will continue to oppose planning applications where they may encroach on AONB's or have a detrimental impact on the surrounding landscape.

We have provided support for the local community on Portland as they challenge the opening of a new quarry on the coastline near Portland Bill. At present negotiations are still in progress and given the varied wildlife found on the site, it is hoped that this campaign will also be successful.

The Branch continues to give much support to the national anti-litter campaign STOP THE DROP launched by our national President, Bill Bryson, and our Dorset Campaign Against Litter (DCAL) Committee now involves almost all the local district councils. The campaigns in Dorchester and Chickerell, under the leadership of CPRE members Bob Kerr and Brian Bean respectively, are making significant progress although we feel that the problem is trying to educate some of the population that it is not only illegal to drop litter but it is also an extremely anti-social habit.

At regional level there is great concern over the number of proposed housing developments, which might go ahead and would involve building on Grade A agricultural land which in my opinion is both short sighted and a threat to future food security. However, another tangible success has been the fact that the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the plan for the southwest for the next 15-20 years, has been shelved for the moment and is unlikely to be considered until after the General Election.

Other aspects of the Committee's work cover arguing for the enforcement of speed limits for vehicles which race through our villages, and opposing the emergence of a proposal to re-open a planning application for a Waste Site at Gore Cross which overlooks the AONB. The original proposal was thrown out by an Inspector, but it would seem the County Council still sees Gore Cross as the best location for this project.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

In an attempt to involve more members directly, we are in the process of developing the Dorset CPRE web site. The site is now updated on a regular basis, and will allow members to keep in touch with the work of their local group committees. Please complete and return the website questionnaire enclosed with this letter as we want to know how often you look at our website, whether you like what you find and whether there is anything else you would like to see included on it. And if you would like to join one of our local committees or act as a volunteer do get in touch with the Branch office. We are always short of active volunteer members who have the time and the skills to work for CPRE.

RECRUIT A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR

Although we are one of the most successful Branches in the country for recruiting new members, we cannot be complacent and I would ask everyone to try and recruit at least one new member in the coming 12 months.

DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

Whilst our finances are currently in good shape, thanks to two recent legacies, we always need funds to support our campaigns and legal advice if needed is expensive. We also have to provide not only material in support of campaigns but seek expert opinion on matters relating for example to complex planning issues. If you feel able to make a donation and are a taxpayer I would ask you to complete and return the enclosed Gift Aid form with your donation. Perhaps in the longer term you would also consider making some provision for us in your will. I can assure you we will make the maximum use of any donations you make and thank you in anticipation.

Finally, I look forward to meeting you at CPRE events around the county and of course at our Branch AGM, which this year will be held at Cerne Abbas Village Hall on Saturday 21st November when our guest speaker will be the National CPRE Chairman, Peter Waine. If you have any points you wish to raise at any time please contact me either by e-mail on richardnicholls452@btinternet.com or by phone on 01308-422679.

Richard Nicholls

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