



The countryside charity
Oxfordshire

Campaigning to protect our rural county

www.cpreoxon.org.uk

Autumn 2024

Oxfordshire Voice



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DIRECTORY

Views expressed in the Voice are not necessarily those of CPRE Oxfordshire, which welcomes independent comment.

Editor: Nemone Caldwell

Cover: A youngster enjoys the blooms on our event with Refugee Resource.

Photo: Nemone Caldwell.

Articles, letters, comments and suggestions for articles are welcome. Please contact the Branch Office below. Published November 2024

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Chair's voice



This is a time of new beginnings, both within CPRE and in the country more widely. After many years as a dedicated Trustee and three further years as our Chairman, Professor Richard Harding stepped down at the end of June. Our sincere thanks and admiration for the brilliant job that Richard did, and, I'm delighted to say, continues to do – since he will be staying involved with CPRE Oxfordshire as our expert on water issues, and sharing his expertise with the wider CPRE network through his chairmanship of the network water group.

So I have the pleasure of writing to you for the first time as the new Chair of Oxfordshire CPRE! I'm based in the Vale of the White Horse, at the foot of the Ridgeway, with many varied family connections to the county. Having lived overseas for many years in different parts of the world, working with international organisations, every time I came back to England I realised again how much I cherished the countryside and the freedom that we have in this country to access it and enjoy it; so my commitment to CPRE was an easy one to make. Having been a volunteer Trustee for a couple of years now, I can say that the issues we are collectively working on are now familiar ones, and I look forward to working with you all – volunteers, staff, supporters and of course my fellow Trustees – in exploring these

issues further as Chair, championing the causes we believe in so passionately at CPRE, and making our case in the right places.

The need for organisations such as ours is getting ever more critical as we see the effects of climate change and nature depletion around us, and the pressures on the countryside increase. While I'm pleased that the new government has set out its intention to reset the relationship between government and civil society through a new 'covenant', they will need to demonstrate that they are listening as we (and other charitable organisations) bring important voices to the table.

I am delighted to welcome Lisa Warne as the new Director of CPRE Oxfordshire, taking over the reins from our outgoing Director, Helen Marshall. While only a few weeks into the job, Lisa has already appeared on our behalf on both the BBC and ITV, and we wish her the very best of luck in steering us. Completing the trio of new appointments, I am also thrilled that Felicity Dick agreed to become our President, taking over from John Harwood in June.

We have a long list of issues to keep campaigning on: the challenges to the Green Belt presented by the National Planning Policy Framework, the difficulty of balancing the transition to renewable energy while protecting the countryside, the urgency of the nature crisis with the UK now shamed as one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world... the list goes on.

None of these we can fix alone and we will continue to partner effectively across the county, combining our voice and our influence with those of others. A huge thank you to all our members and volunteers for your support, in whatever form that takes – by taking combined action we can make a clear and positive contribution to protecting our countryside for the future.

Susie Mather, Chair



Welcome Lisa

Government Ministers to develop new policy for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). No stranger to planning, she was previously Head of Operations for the Sustainable Development Team at Natural England, overseeing the responses to 19,000 planning applications every year!

“I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Director for CPRE Oxfordshire and I wanted to say a personal thank you to Helen Marshall for holding the fort for the past 13 years. She has brought the charity on leaps and bounds and her legacy will continue for many years to come.

“It is pleasure to join such a dedicated and passionate organisation that can have a positive impact on our local environment. As I have been getting to grips with the work of CPRE over the last few weeks it astounds me the depth and

breadth of our work. We have made so many positive impacts on the environment in our local area.

“A little bit about me: I was brought up on a dairy and arable farm in the Cotswolds and spent my childhood wandering the farm and learning about nature. I now have two boys 14 and 11 and my happiest days with my family are exploring our glorious landscapes within the UK. In my spare time I enjoy long distance running and you will often find me training for my next challenge. I have also been known to do the odd long-distance swim if I can squeeze it in!

“Thank you for the warm welcome I have already received from many of you. I am excited about the opportunities ahead and look forward to working with you and continuing CPRE’s mission of a thriving, beautiful countryside for everyone.”

Some of you will have already met our new Director, Lisa Warne, who joined us in September and has hit the ground running with our numerous campaigns. Bringing a wealth of experience and expertise, she comes to us from DEFRA, having worked on the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS), collaborating with stakeholders and

All change at CPRE Oxfordshire

Alongside our new director, we have also welcomed a new Communications and Events Manager to the team! Nemone Caldwell comes from a design and communication background and has been volunteering in the environmental charity sector for over a decade. She’s also a keen photographer, and you’ll see some of her pictures across this issue of The Voice:

“I’ve always strived to work with ethical clients with a community focus, so moving to CPRE Oxfordshire is a dream job which ticks all the boxes. As a mother of two young sons, working to protect the environment is a huge thing for me. We live in worrying times and I believe that a disconnect with nature is a big part of the problem. I live on a solar-powered electric barge with my husband and two kids, and we’re relatively new to Oxfordshire, having washed up on the river Thames four years ago. We all love the river and the surrounding countryside and have met some wonderful people.”

We also have some old faces taking up new roles. Susie Mather has taken over from Richard Harding as Chair, with Claudia Lusardi as Vice Chair, and Felicity Dick is our new president: “I am very pleased to be the new President of Oxfordshire CPRE - there are some challenging issues but I hope that by working together and with other agencies we can maintain and improve the rural environment around us.

New Oxford City Committee up and running!

After a long period of quiet, The Oxford City District Committee is back up and running with a new Chair, Elizabeth Gillespie:

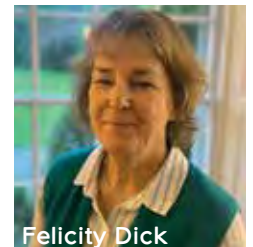
“My predominant interest is to protect the setting of the city from harmful development both from without and within. I am passionate about the importance of the role of the Green Belt, very conscious of the need for housing but equally keen that housing is of both good quality and place.”



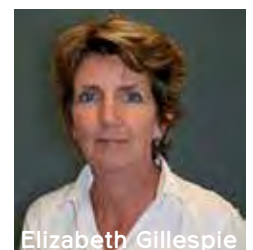
Nemone Caldwell



Claudia Lusardi



Felicity Dick



Elizabeth Gillespie

Upcoming events

Oxford Green Fair

We'll be running a stall again at this year's Oxford Green Fair on Sunday 1st December at Oxford Town Hall. Now in its 43rd year, the Oxford Green Fair is one of the city's longest running and best loved Christmas markets. With ethical stalls, live music it's a great place to get your Christmas gifts and meet other local community and charity organisations. We'll be focusing on the Oxford Green Belt and how to protect it and we hope to see some of you down there.

Friday Farm Walk

Find out about everything from regenerative agriculture and sustainable food to growing heritage wheat for artisan breadmaking on an inspiring and informative guided farm walk with FarmEd at Honeydale Farm in Chipping Norton. A session lasts around 4 hours and tickets are £35 per person, including lunch.

Dates are yet to be confirmed but if you're interested, please drop Nemone a line at comms@cpreoxon.org.uk

PHOTOS: DAVID MARSH



Walkers tackle Streatley Hill

Events

Open Gardens

Thanks to everyone who came along to our two Open Garden events over the summer. The first was in June at the spectacular grounds of College House in Stanton St John, and the second took place in July across two wonderful gardens at Coopers and Woolstone Lodge.

We managed to raise over £800 altogether, helping us to protect our countryside. We're very grateful both to the garden owners and those who came along to enjoy them.

If you are interested in opening your garden for a members' event next spring, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch with Nemone, our events manager: comms@cpreoxon.org.

Countryside Day

On Saturday 7 September, we celebrated CPRE's Countryside Day with CPRE Berkshire on our shared border at Goring Village Hall. This was part of a pilot aimed at establishing an annual event for CPRE to recognise all that is wonderful about the countryside and strengthen our connection with it. Visitors were able to enjoy walks around Streatley Hill in the morning and along the river in the afternoon. Thanks to our volunteers who helped make the day run smoothly.

Dark Skies

We've had a lot of interest in our Dark Skies campaign recently, raising awareness around light pollution



Gathering at Goring Village Hall

and what we can do to avoid it. We kicked off Greener Henley's Great Big Green Week with our Dark Skies stall at their Nature Discovery Day in June, while Richard Harding gave a talk to the with the Benson Area Nature Group (BANG) on 15 October with plans to do another for the Cholsey Environment Group (CHEC) on 14 Feb 2025. Read his article on page 10.

WANTED: District Chairs for Cherwell and South Oxfordshire

Could you spare a few hours a month to help co-ordinate a small group of passionate volunteers? We are still looking for two District Chairs to help us in their local patch – one in Cherwell and one in South Oxfordshire. Our District Committees are vital in providing a first line of support for local communities who have concerns about development in their area. They also help to communicate information on CPRE's campaigns and activities and identify opportunities for practical countryside improvement projects. Overall, it's a key way in which we help local people speak up for their countryside.

We have volunteers in place but each of these Districts is now in need of a Chair to provide co-ordination. Could you help?

No specific experience is required as we can provide any training needed, but it would help if you can demonstrate some leadership and organisational experience (either in a paid or voluntary capacity). For further info and to express an interest, please email: campaign@cpreoxon.org.uk



Access all areas

Access to the countryside is so important, not only for our physical and mental wellbeing, but also allowing us to form a connection to our environment and therefore be inspired to protect it. Part of CPRE's work is to help to break down barriers, whether they're cultural or physical, to make sure that everyone can enjoy the benefits of being in nature. We held two events in the spring which did just that.

Refugees welcome!

We teamed up with Refugee Resource in May to take a small group of women and children (see cover photo) to Harcourt Arboretum in Oxford.

This was the first visit to the arboretum for all attendees, most of whom had never heard of it. Dr Rodger Caseby gave a fascinating tour, highlighting some of the trees and plants that would have been completely unknown to the women, and we were able to talk to them about the Green Belt and the wider work of CPRE.

The overwhelming feedback was that the trip wasn't long enough, so appetite for this sort of outing is clearly very strong. We plan to organise more events providing access to nature to those who might not otherwise be aware of it.



If you have any ideas for an event, please drop a line to comms@cprexon.org.uk

Opening the gates

The following day, we invited a small group of people on a 3 mile celebratory walk to mark the completion of the current stage of our Oxford Green Belt Way improvement project. The project aims to increase its accessibility of the way, opening it up to anyone, regardless of age or physical ability. This stage involved replacing nine stiles with accessible, self-closing gates at sites in Toot Baldon, Nuneham Courtenay, Cumnor and Wytham.

The project was implemented by Oxfordshire County Council's

Countryside Access Team, made possible through a grant from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE), with funding from Grundon. The work to replace the stiles covered sections 1-6 of the 9 sections on the OGBW and means around half the route is now stile-free with an ambition to remove stiles on the remaining sections in due course.

Don't forget you can buy your guide to the Oxford Green Belt Way – details on page 12

And read about Jamie and Nicola's adventures as they closed the loop on page 11.

CPRE members walk to Dornford Lane – an ancient drovers’ road under threat



Thanks to everyone who joined us on our walk along Dornford Lane near Woodstock in October. The walk, which aimed to highlight the unique cultural heritage and irreplaceable biodiversity of the lane, was very well attended, and we were blessed with a break in the rain as we set off and immersed ourselves in the lush landscape.

Dornford Lane boasts an extraordinary width and density of trees, shrubs and other planting on either side, and was used for hundreds of years to move goods and livestock to and from Woodstock Palace (now Blenheim Palace). Rosie Prail from Stop Botley West delivered a fascinating talk on the history of the lane, while Dr Julian Parfitt, an ecologist and biodiversity specialist, demonstrated how to register veteran trees with the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory (see page 7).

Sadly, Dornford Lane is just one of the areas which are currently under threat from plans for the Botley West Solar Farm. PhotoVolt Development Partners (PVDP) proposes to surround stretches of the lane with solar panels on Blenheim Estate farmland as part of its controversial 3,200-acre Solar Farm, as well as using the lane itself for maintenance vehicles.



Anyone who came on the walk will realise how difficult it would be to do this destroying irreplaceable wildlife habitat.

If you're interested to find out more about the issues, visit stopbotleywest.com

Citizen Science – ancient and veteran trees



Dr Julian Parfitt identifying a veteran Field Maple on our Dornford Lane Walk

You can't protect it if you don't know it's there!

Knowing the countryside is the first step to protecting it, and it's local people who are best placed to do this. There are lots of citizen science projects you can get involved with, from measuring water quality in your local river, to monitoring pollinators in your garden. Another invaluable thing to look out for is any ancient or veteran trees, which can then be registered on the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory.

An ancient tree may have legal protection if it provides a home to another legally protected species. The Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Countryside and Rights of Way provide protection for all bats and their roosts, some birds, fungi, lichens and invertebrates, while important hedgerows are also protected under the Hedgerow Regulations.

Don't be fooled by size

While most people will recognise a mature oak tree looming above, there are other trees which may not look quite so impressive but still hold great ecological value. On our Dornford Lane walk (page 6), Dr Julian Parfitt found a veteran field maple (picture) which might have been otherwise overlooked, and registered it on the inventory.

Even dead trees have value

Contrary to what you might think, it's worth noting dead trees too.

Unfortunately, some landowners have an overly tidy attitude, so things get taken out because they look untidy, but they actually provide incredibly valuable habitat. Some of the fungal species that live on dead trees can be quite rare, and there is a whole list of beetles which need rotting trees for their larval stage so it's important to keep these things in place.

How to register an ancient or veteran tree

If you spot a tree which you think might qualify as an ancient or veteran tree, you will need:

- A method of recording the location of a tree (10 figure grid reference). This could be either on a mobile phone, GPS unit or a map.
- A tape measure
- A camera

Measure the girth of the tree 1.5 m from the ground, keeping the measuring tape as level as possible, make a note of the grid reference and the condition of the tree, looking for things like holes in branches, dead and dying branches and any fungi or lichen. If you're unsure of the species, don't worry too much. Take some photos and upload them, along with the information you've gathered, to the Woodland Trust ATI.

More information at <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

Dark Skies

– what can we do?

Did you know that more than 80 per cent of the world's population lives under a "lit sky", and in Europe and North America the figure is closer to 99 per cent? And it is getting worse - between 2012 to 2016, artificially lit outdoor areas increased by 2.2 per cent per year. Light pollution deprives us of the wonders of a starlit night and also does immense damage to wildlife. Nocturnal insects, such as moths, really suffer, with knock-on effects on bats, birds and pollination. Many migratory birds such as ducks, geese, sandpipers and songbirds of all kinds, as well as seabirds, migrate at night. Light pollution will disrupt their biological clocks and flight patterns leaving them disorientated and exhausted, leading to millions of deaths a year.

There is a lot we can do about our over-lit skies. Downward facing lights make a big difference – thankfully most modern streetlights are like this, but a lot of commercial and domestic lighting still shines up and out into the night. Shutting curtains and avoiding large lit windows and roof lights are also good (and will save heating bills). Of course, the best thing we can do is switch lights off when they are not needed! Interestingly crime rates have repeatedly been shown to decrease where street-lighting has been turned off in the small hours of the morning – presumably criminals don't like working in the dark!

South Oxfordshire and the Vale have a groundbreaking policy in their upcoming Local Plan to minimise light pollution in new developments. We will need to be even more eagle eyed to assess planning applications in the future.

If you want to know more the CPRE website has wealth of information on dark skies, campaigns and star count surveys. And if you think you can help us locally to discourage the light pollution in our skies please get in touch.

Hedgerow Heroes enters phase 4!



We're delighted to announce that our Hedgerow Heroes project has now entered its fourth year having secured another round of funding. Working in partnership with Wild Oxfordshire, the next stage of the project will see local communities coming together to plant and rejuvenate hedgerows on seven sites across Oxfordshire. These will be in key Conservation Target Areas where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and creation.

Our target this season is to plant and restore 2700 metres of hedgerow across the county. Milton-Under-Wychwood will be the most ambitious

site with 1km of new planting and gapping up planned. There will also be hedgelaying training days planned, providing skills to enable volunteers to take care of their own hedges and hopefully be inspired to share their knowledge.

Hedgerow Heroes is not only hugely important in terms of enriching habitat, increasing biodiversity and mitigating against the effects of climate change, but also provides wider mental and physical health benefits of outdoor learning for all volunteers.

Here are the dates for the phase 4:

Saturday 26 Oct	Hedgelaying Workshop – Witney
Saturday 23 Nov	Hedgelaying Workshop – Witney
Sunday 24 or Thurs 28 Nov TBC	Planting day Milton-u-Wychwood – Peter Rawlins site
Saturday 30 Nov	Planting day Milton-u-Wychwood – Pond site
Saturday 7 Dec	Ground prep day – Childrey and Challow
Sunday 8 Dec	Planting day – Childrey and Challow OCV
Saturday 14 Dec	Back up planting day – Bloxham
Monday 16 Dec	Planting day Oddington – FarmAbility
Wednesday 18 Dec	Backup planting day Oddington – FarmAbility
Sunday 22 Dec	Planting day Milton-u-Wychwood – OCV
Sunday 29 Dec	Planting day - Childrey and Challow (East Challow) TBC

If you and your local community would be interested participating, please contact jessica@wildoxfordshire.org.uk

Planning updates

New Government, new NPPF

The new Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with consultation open until 24 September.

Included in the policy was the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets with changes to the previous standard method for calculating them. The new methodology proposed applies a percentage uplift on previous housing growth in an area, an approach which we oppose as it penalises those areas which have seen and delivered large numbers of housing already and is at odds with the Levelling Up agenda. This would result in a 60% increase in housebuilding across Oxfordshire, with the numbers for South Oxfordshire doubling. We believe that just building more houses, won't create more affordable homes.

The new NPPF also introduces the concept of a "Grey Belt". This is a term which we oppose and feel is misleading as it is not a "Belt", rather an attack on pockets of lands in our much loved Green Belt, which encircles and protects the city of Oxford. We fear this will bring forward many more sites surrounding our city for development and will be closely monitoring and opposing any further erosion of the Green Belt.

We worked together with National CPRE to respond to the consultation and a full response can be found on the national website here: <https://tinyurl.com/4x3w8rd5>

Draft Oxford Local Plan rejected

Big news in September as the draft Oxford City Local Plan was rejected by the Planning Inspector due to failure in duty to cooperate and a flawed Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) – points

which CPRE Oxfordshire had previously argued, so we were very pleased to see this.

The Plan, which prioritised its own city centre brownfield sites for employment rather than homes, and proposed highly inflated housing numbers to be largely offloaded to surrounding districts and the Green Belt, was strongly challenged by CPRE Oxfordshire, Need not Greed and South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire District councils.

The Inspector rejected the Plan, concluding that Oxford City council did not meet their “Duty to cooperate” with neighbouring councils in the preparation of this Plan, and that,

There is no clear justification in this case for departing from the standard method, exceptional circumstances do not exist.

CPRE Oxfordshire welcomes the opportunity to revisit this Plan, and we will continue to positively contribute to its refinement. We remain supportive of the urgent need to address the requirement for homes which are genuinely affordable, including social housing, but continue to call for these to be built at high density levels on brownfield sites within the city, where residents want to live and where the infrastructure, services and facilities are there to support them.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

Following two previous stages of consultation the Joint South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Plan is now entering the final technical stage (known as Reg19), before being submitted for external examination to the Planning Inspector.

There is much to support and celebrate in this Plan as our previous representatives have been heard and actioned. Our initial findings are:

- In the first stage of consultation, we were asked to rank priorities and “protecting the countryside”

came out on top. We like to think this was helped by our strong campaigning, and the priority has shaped many of the policies we see within this Plan.

- Alongside policy wording to manage light pollution, there is a proactive approach to preserving and enhancing our Dark Skies. This is something that CPRE Oxfordshire has been campaigning for over several years and it’s great to see this issue coming forward, the first such proactive policy in any of our county district Plans. We will be encouraging other districts to follow suit!

The Plan has an overall ambition, with policy to back this up, to support development that is sustainable both in terms of construction and operation. It acknowledges that development must respond to our climate emergency and be fit for the future.

Of concern:

In initial drafts of this Plan, we commented on policy specifically relating to development in the Green Belt. This has been deleted and instead replaced with a general comment that Green Belt policy will follow National Policy. We do not agree and will be advocating that the Plan must include wording which prevents further development on our cherished Green Belt. We cannot be silent on this issue

The consultation runs until 12 November 2024.

Abingdon Reservoir

The consultation for Thames Water’s plans to build a new reservoir near Abingdon closed on 28 August yet, just one week later, the Government approved their Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP), effectively giving the reservoir the green light. This is despite advice from the Environment Agency that the plan should not go ahead due to “outstanding concerns regarding costs, justification and options appraisal”. We are still hoping for a public inquiry and are working together with the Group Against

Reservoir Development (GARD) to work out our next steps.

Two solar farms refused

In July, Cherwell District Council’s Planning Committee reviewed the application for two solar farms: one proposed for the middle of Otmoor on the Oxfordshire Green Belt, the other on open countryside at Godington, a tiny village near Stratton Audley. Following impassioned statements from locals, including our own spokesperson from CPRE, both were rejected though in both cases, the council’s planning officers had recommended approval.

Michael Tyce of CPRE Oxfordshire told the committee that, according to the Oxfordshire Councils own adopted strategy ‘Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire’, only 1% of Oxfordshire was needed for solar energy and therefore solar panels should be on domestic and industrial roofs where the electricity is needed, not on the Green Belt.

The committee went on to refuse the applications by a majority on the basis that in each case the harm to the local landscape and environment outweighed the benefit of solar energy on sites such as these.

We applaud this decision and hope this reflects a move to protect our green belt and the wider countryside.

Green Defenders

We brace for an active period of development ahead of us. With high housing targets in Oxfordshire proposed in the new NPPF and many Local Plan starting to reach end stages it is vital that we continue to voice our concerns and fight for our countryside. We have a small staff team who can offer support but we largely rely on our volunteers to flag up, research and reply to planning applications in their local areas. Can you help in your area and become a Green Defender? Contact our Planning coordinator, Lynda Moore at lyndam@cprexon.org.uk or on 0739 900690 if you’d like an informal chat about how you can help.

A catastrophe for the Oxfordshire countryside



Ecologist Dr Julian Parfitt and Derek Stork, Chair of GARD, show Lisa Warne around the proposed site of the reservoir

In Early September this year DEFRA’s Secretary of State, Stephen Read, approved the Thames Water ‘Water Resource Management Plan’, this essentially gives a green light to the plans for a four and a half square mile bunded reservoir to the south of Abingdon. This was despite the Environment Agency deeming that the plan was flawed and needed revision.

The proposed reservoir would be an environmental disaster. The project would destroy an extensive area of open countryside, within which a recent survey identified hundreds of veteran and rare trees. This is rich farmland in full view of the Noth Wessex Downs National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The construction phase, lasting up to ten years, will dig out millions of tons of the underlying clay to create 30 m high bunds and millions require the import of millions of tons of rock to line the bunds. This would be one of the largest building sites in Britain – involving hundreds of thousands of lorry and train journeys across our already overloaded roads.

Analyses by CPRE and our partner, GARD (Group Against Reservoir

Development), have repeatedly shown that this reservoir is not needed. The so-called need is based on exaggerated demand estimates and a very expensive scheme to transfer water from the Thames to the south coast. We will need more water resource in the southeast in the coming decades – to supply our increasing population and take pressure of our precious chalk streams - but this is not an environmentally correct, nor even, a cost-effective way of achieving this. Reducing leaks and wastage and smaller schemes involving reuse and water transfers would be less environmentally damaging, scalable and cheaper.

A bunded reservoir of this size has never been built in the UK, nor in Europe. Reservoir experts consulted by GARD point to the huge dangers of a dam break and the possibility of flooding of the surrounding and downstream areas. Do we trust Thames Water to complete this huge engineering project safely, on time and within budget?

This proposal has been opposed by Oxfordshire County Council, the District Councils, as well as many local groups. CPRE (and others) have been calling for a full and open

Public Inquiry – a call that has so far been ignored. CPRE will continue to campaign against the reservoir and support local groups efforts to get the decision by the Secretary of State reversed.

Richard Harding



Take Action!

Please sign and share the CPRE Oxfordshire and GARD petition against the reservoir:



Scan the QR code, or visit: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/p/stopTWreservoir>

We came; we saw; we closed the loop

Many readers may have been unable to rest at night, wondering whether Nic and I finished our epic Oxford Greenbelt Way expedition (see CPRE Oxfordshire Voice Spring 2024 edition). You may recall that we had made it as far as Kidlington with fifty-odd miles under our belts and just ten or eleven miles remaining, but the twin evils of new jobs and work commitments had scuppered our grand finale.

Wonder no more. On an absolutely glorious early autumn day in September we closed the loop, in what was a moment of intense satisfaction for the completer-finisher in me. With no need for woolly hats, raincoats, or even a jumper (!) we bused it to Kidlington, full of vim, vigour, and toast. Only to spend half an hour trying to remember where we'd left off, back in February. Having finally retraced our steps through the residential streets (much to the bemusement/amusement of local residents who I imagine don't see a lot of walking boots at the end of their driveways) we were quickly back onto the country paths. And Day 6 had a lot to offer.

Passing Water Eaton Manor and its heavily laden apple trees, then Sparsey Bridge, the terrain becomes grassier underfoot and navigation becomes a matter of counting how many fields you've passed through. We were now approaching a landscape more familiar to me, with the mast at Shotover Hill becoming an ever-present and



the John Radcliffe Hospital buildings hovering in and out of view. On more than one occasion I had the very pleasant sensation of being on an unfamiliar path only for it to open out on to a track or road that I've walked or cycled many times before.

So, what else did we discover on our final day? More sloes which have made it into sloe and apple jam rather than anything alcoholic this time around. The most incredible sunflower field hidden just a stone's throw from the main lane through Elsfield. And another great pub, the Abingdon Arms - though to be fair we knew this in advance... If you do visit, be sure to check out the locally-produced pamphlet chronicling Evelyn Waugh's fondness for a tippie in Beckley in his Oxford University student days - let's just say that he seemed to live a lifestyle that wasn't short of liquid refreshment and boozy get-togethers, including sleeping at the pub on more than one occasion.

a slight feeling of anti-climax, but principally from the standpoint of a good thing coming to an end. Walking through the residential streets of Sandhills felt like a return to normality the closer we got to the sound of ring road traffic and children returning home from school. We hadn't quite managed to identify the location on the cover of the OGW walking guidebook and unfortunately there was no tickertape welcome from the throng of commuters at Thornhills Park and Ride. Even more sadly the Masons Arms was closed, with it being a Monday. But probably most of all I had a sense that my and Nic's time as friends hanging out and chatting was coming to an end, and it would take an effort to replace our walk with some other excuse to meet up. Unless maybe one of us stumbles across a dusty copy of the Oxfordshire Way guidebook in a second-hand bookshop somewhere...



As we finished the walk there was

Jamie Barber

In memory

Dr John Cobb

(15 May 1949 - 29 July 2024)

It is with great regret that we record the death of John Cobb who was a member of CPRE since 1993 and who joined the CPRE District Committee of the Vale of White Horse in 2020. John's contribution to fighting local issues was much appreciated for his disciplined approach and thorough analysis of whatever he took on. We will miss his valued participation as a Committee member where his comments were always straight to the point and even on issues which were not of his particular interest. We will remember his courtesy and gentle manner when sharing his concerns. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his partner Sue and his family at their loss.

Peter Jay

(7 February 1937 -
22 September 2024)



We would like to pay tribute to our good friend Peter Jay, who sadly died peacefully at home on 22 September. Peter was passionate about the Oxfordshire countryside, a strong supporter of CPRE and highly influential in the founding and running of Need Not Greed Oxfordshire. In the words of Councillor John Broad: "he did so much for CPRE Oxfordshire over the years, his superb mind is a loss to us all".

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The Oxford Green Belt Way is a fifty mile circular walk exploring the countryside around Oxford, created by CPRE Oxfordshire in 2007. The guide contains route maps for each stage of the Oxford Green Belt Way (OGBW) and detailed route directions. The whole route is waymarked with OGBW discs to help you find your way.



The OGBW is accessible by regular bus services, from four of Oxford's Park and Ride sites, Oxford Parkway station and Radley station.

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A walk across Oxfordshire from the Cotswolds to the Chilterns. The route runs from Bourton-on-the-Water to Henley-on-Thames.



This edition represents a homecoming for the Oxfordshire Way, as the original guide, written by the late Alison Kemp, was also published by Oxfordshire CPRE in 1978. This new guide also includes 12 circular walks along parts of the route, ranging in length from 4.1 to 9.9 miles. The text and each circular walk gives details of nearby places of interest and is accompanied by special maps.

This edition has been sponsored by CPRE Oxfordshire with support from the Oxford Fieldpaths Society.

D'Arcy Dalton Way – £12

The d'Arcy Dalton Way is a long-distance walk named after Col. W.P. d'Arcy Dalton, a notable defender of Oxfordshire's rights of way and the first chairman of CPRE Oxfordshire's Rights of Way Group. The 66 mile walk follows the western boundary of Oxfordshire, running north of Banbury to south of Abingdon.



This revised edition is an essential companion to anyone walking the 66 miles which pass through almost wholly unspoiled countryside, taking in tranquil and little-known villages and enjoying wildlife along the way. There are also descriptions of eight circular walks off the main route.

This edition has been sponsored by CPRE Oxfordshire with support from the Oxford Fieldpaths Society.

Copies are available from selected bookshops, stationers and information centres in Oxfordshire and surrounding counties. It is also available on-line from Walking Pages, and Blackwell's. To obtain a copy direct from CPRE Oxfordshire, please send a cheque made payable to CPRE Oxfordshire to CPRE, 20 High Street, Watlington, Oxon OX49 5PY, incl. details of where to send the guide/s.

Prices include £2 postage & packaging. For further information email: administrator@cpreoxon.org.uk or telephone 01491 612079.

Oxfordshire Voice

Published biannually by the Oxfordshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Design: Rob Bowker T: 01491 825609

Recycled print: Seacourt Ltd



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