

2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of CPRE Hampshire took place virtually by Zoom on Saturday 24th April, 2021 starting at 10:00am.

Present: 32 members
Proxies: 13

Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

The Earl of Malmesbury, President of CPRE Hampshire formally opened the meeting, noting that it was good to see so many present. He thanked the Trustees, staff, volunteers, members and supporters for all their hard work and support for CPRE Hampshire.

Item 2: Briefing on Zoom

Dee Haas, Chair of CPRE Hampshire welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided a short briefing on Zoom technology.

Item 3: Apologies

There were no apologies.

Item 4: Minutes of the 2020 AGM held on 12th September 2020

Adoption of the minutes was proposed by Carole Oldham and seconded by Michael Rescorle. The motion was carried by majority. The President will sign the minutes at a later date.

Item 5: Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Item 6: Adoption of Statement of Accounts for 2020

Martin Gillie, Honorary Treasurer of CPRE Hampshire, noted that copies of the annual accounts for 2020 had been sent as part of the Annual Report ahead of the meeting.

Mr Gillie said that 2020 had been an excellent recovery in a difficult year. The key elements were: a restructuring with annual staff costs reduced from £48,000 to £36,000; the NEF report produced at a cost of £15,000; unexpected grant and legacy income of £15,000; the best response to an appeal in many years of £18,000. The end of year unrestricted reserves were £79,000, well above the minimum of £70,000.

Mr Gillie said that the current position in 2020 is based on a conservative forecast income. The Branch has three freelance employees. A small deficit is envisaged. A key project is 'Hedgerow Heroes', the replanting of hedges, with funds provided via National CPRE. The smaller staff may not be sustainable in the longer term and more staff may be required. An increase in membership and fundraising will be needed to achieve this. Improved communications work has been vital to maintain the charity's profile. Lastly, climate change is a key issue which needs to be addressed constructively.

Michael Rescorle thanked Mr Gillie and said how impressed he was. He asked the reason for the good response to the appeal. Mr Gillie said it was probably down to the pandemic since there were some people with unspent money, and the hard work on the White Paper which led to donations from Parish Councils. Dee Haas said that the appeal may have been helped because the letter explained

that the charity had been unable to run any events during the year, and that money had not been made on those live events.

The Treasurer asked for the Statement of Accounts for 2020 to be adopted. This was proposed by Christopher Napier and seconded by Bob Wren. Carried by majority.

Item 7: Election of Officers

a. Appointment of Honorary Officers

Dee Haas, Chair

Proposed by the Earl of Malmesbury and seconded by Carole Oldham

Carried by majority.

b. Election of Trustees

Dee Haas, Alastair Clark, Peter Prag, John Lauwerys, Liz Michel, John Rosling, Neil Henderson

Proposed by Carole Oldham and seconded by Bob Wren

Carried by majority.

Item 8: Any other business

There was none.

Item 9: Volunteer Awards

Dee Haas announced that she was presenting awards to a number of volunteers of the Branch to recognize them for the work they have been doing.

Moya Grove was awarded a special contribution award for her work on water as a stalwart of the PPG, and her work for the Test Valley DG. Moya Grove thanked the Charity for the framework and structure that CPRE Hampshire provided and thanked everyone and in particular, Nick Walton.

John Moon for his help with the Test Valley DG, and also for his quantitative and statistical knowledge for CPRE Hampshire and National Issues on housing numbers. John Moon thanked Dee Haas for the award and said he felt he hadn't done enough but hoped to do more.

Nevill Wilson for his work as part of the North Hampshire DG as the secretary since 2000 and his fundraising work in particular. Christopher Napier added that Nevill Wilson had also been a trustee for a number of years.

Peter Bedford for his work as Chair of the North Hampshire DG and also as Chair of the Branch, which he ran with a spirit of generosity and raised thousands of pounds for CPRE Hampshire.

Valerie Bedford who has worked so hard behind the scenes with Peter Bedford, in particular hosting the Autumn Suppers and events in their barn and not getting the recognition she deserved.

Philip Todd who has volunteered for CPRE Hampshire for over 25 years, and especially as planning lead for the North East DG.

Dee Haas concluded by thanking all the volunteers, stating that they are at the heart of the Branch and make CPRE Hampshire what it is. Edward Dawson added his thanks to the Bedfords and Philip Todd. After being asked by Dee Haas, Edward Dawson then provided some background about Ruth Block, mentioning her work fighting the new town proposals and as Chair for 8 years.

Michael Rescorle said how delighted he was to see the Branch in such good fettle, the number of new trustees on board and that is was a credit to Dee Haas.

There was then a coffee break of 20 minutes.

Item 10: Highlights of 2020 and what the Future Holds

Chair Dee Haas welcomed everyone to the AGM and the talk from Simon Murray, Chair of the National Charity, including non-members present.

She thanked all her colleagues and volunteers for their hard work. She welcomed and thanked the four new trustees, and the office staff Natalie Hargreaves Nicola Revolta and Mandy Roberts.

Mrs Haas explained that campaigning to protect the countryside is at the heart of what the Charity does and how important it is to mitigate climate change from government to parish council level. In doing so, it is so important for the Charity to bring the public with it, and that is why Natalie, the membership and volunteer coordinator has been recruited. There had been a marked increase in support from the public.

The following highlights of the past year were identified:

- Fundamental to campaigning for the countryside this year had been the NEF report commissioned by the Branch, which has been used in discussions with councillors and MPs. The Hampshire Green Belt campaign petition is now up to approximately 15,000 signatures.
- Work on the government's two White Papers, led by Caroline Dibden and Carole Oldham. The work contributed to the backbench rebellion which caused the algorithm to be changed
- Another highlight was the victory in defeating the Eastleigh Local Plan, headed by ADD which was led by new trustee, John Lauwerys.
- Following several large rural sites in East Hampshire DC local plan, a small team led by Christopher Napier drew up Valued Landscape assessments and submitted them to the council, which then engaged its own Valued Landscape assessments which broadly concurred with the CPRE work. Christopher Napier and Carole Oldham have since drawn up several more reports on NPPF Valued Landscapes.
- Mrs Haas noted that the potential development south of Winchester at Royaldown would be in the proposed South Hampshire greenbelt. Thought is also being given into creating another AONB in North Hampshire.
- The Branch was invited to take part in a Defra ELM Test and Trial, as one of three voluntary sector partners. The purpose is to look at developing a draft framework of public goods, objectives and land management activities in the two National Character Areas, the North Hampshire Downs and South Hampshire Lowlands. The Branch is also involved in a Commission of Inquiry Vision for Hampshire 2050.
- The Branch worked together with the National Charity on both the Dark Skies campaign and on a leaflet for the local elections.
- Around 115 volunteers now work with the Charity. Dee Haas thanked Natalie Hargreaves for helping the volunteer base grow and develop how the Charity can let them know how much they are appreciated and retain them. She also identified a new litter picking initiative, led by new trustee John Lauwerys.
- Lastly, the Hedgerow Heroes project to plant new hedgerows and restore old ones, which is being led by Boyd McCleary.

Dee Haas finished by thanking everyone involved in the Charity and for everyone attending the AGM.

Item 10: Talk by Simon Murray, Chair of CPRE National

Simon Murray explained that CPRE had many similarities in structure to the National Trust and that it has always been a blend of the national and local. It comprises 40 independent charities and has both a voice in Parliament and local connections.

It was founded in 1926, but in the last 20 years has seen a decline in membership and a reputation as NIMBYs, comprising an aging membership. But, three years ago there was a major review into its purpose. A new strategy, brand and website were introduced with a focus on hard-hitting campaigning. This included a short film on regenerating the countryside, which to date has had approximately 240,000 views.

In the past year, the National Charity has coordinated 40 organisations to oppose the government's planning white paper. This has included access to ministers (two Q&As with Robert Jenrick), representing the wider coalition and generating press interest, overturning the algorithm, the proposal to change the limit on affordable housing to only being required on developments of 40-50+ houses was abandoned, and campaigning both openly and behind the scenes. However, there are still potential problems with zoning which CPRE are pointing out.

There has been a shift to a positive aspect to our campaigning. The positive vision has been developed together with multiple other partners, with 11 points for a new planning framework. This positive approach is why the Charity has been so successful in the past, and it is something that needs to be done again. As part of this positive approach, there have been a number of reports produced, including on rural affordable housing, the green belt, rural transport and a second report on AONBs.

In the future, the Charity wants to develop a number of positive practical projects, such as the hedgerows project and the Dark Skies campaign.

The aim of the Charity is to get better at demonstrating the impact of the campaigning it does, so that communications and marketing are linked better with campaigning. Done properly, this is a virtuous circle, which will help grow the Charity. The countryside is a resource that cannot be wasted.

The next decade is potentially one of rural renaissance. There was an urban renaissance when New Labour came to power. The same could happen for the countryside, but it requires a loud voice and CPRE's strength of broad vision can help bring people together. To achieve this, CPRE needs to be seen as a movement. This requires people to work together and be concerned about what is happening to the countryside in other counties. It also requires a combination of positive projects and hard-hitting opposition to bad policy and bad developments. This will give CPRE the necessary clout to ensure government listens to them. Mr Murray gave the example of the grass-roots campaign in the Forest of Deane in preventing the sell-off of the Forest.

Simon Murray concluded by thanking everyone, and particularly Dee Haas for her support to CPRE National and CPRE Hampshire, the trustees, staff and volunteers, commenting that Hampshire is held up as a good example of CPRE in action.

Item 11: Questions and Comments from the Floor

Dee Haas thanked Simon Murray for his fascinating talk and commented on the positive idea of a rural renaissance.

Edward Dawson thanked Simon Murray on his exposition of the history of CPRE, and said he was attracted by the potential of a rural renaissance.

Christopher Napier commented that he was on the Board when there was the last rebrand of CPRE National in 2000. He said he was very encouraged, because then the Charity did not adopt the two-handed approach with also a positive message. He wished the strategy well.

Simon Murray explained that National is launching a membership drive to support the rebrand, and that the organisation is trying to think as much about people as place. He explained that the reserves of c.£6m are being invested over the coming years (to bring the reserves down to £1.7m) to grow the Charity. He stressed the importance of working together with the county branches.

Liz Michel thanked Simon Murray and asked who the target audience was for membership and whether the Charity understood what their priorities are. Simon Murray explained that they were initially targeting the 55+ age group, because that is the most receptive target audience. However, at the same time the marketing material is aimed at a more inclusive audience to develop a broader brand.

John Lauwerys thanked Simon Murray and asked about broadening the demographic, and particularly the issue of climate change which is much more important for younger people. He suggested that this might involve CPRE having to get more involved in issues that are less comfortable for the Charity, such as airport expansion. Simon Murray said that the Charity has to live with those tensions and take a policy position. He referred to the fact that the majority of central office staff were younger, in their 30s, who were very focussed on climate change.

Simon Murray also highlighted the tension between urban and rural, and balancing access to the countryside with the rural and farming interest. He explained that CPRE could bridge the gap between environmental charities, landowners, and other disparate interests. Dee Haas commented that landowners had not always had positive experiences with urban visitors, but that she wanted to encourage landowners to be more positive and welcome people.

Richard Knox-Johnson thanked Dee Haas and commented positively on Simon Murray talking about linking urban and countryside. He identified the positive work being undertaken by local branches on identifying brownfield land, giving the example of the London Borough of Enfield where CPRE had identified land for over 30,000 houses as compared to the council's assessment of only 2,700 houses. He suggested that Portsmouth and Southsea might have a significant amount of unidentified brownfield land.

Dee Haas thanked Simon Murray for his interesting insight into National CPRE. She also thanked Neil Henderson for hosting the Zoom meeting and taking the minutes.

The Earl of Malmesbury thanked Dee Haas for her leadership on behalf of everyone.

The AGM closed at 11:45.