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CPRE Herefordshire Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Friday 13th October 2017, 9.30-10.25
The Kindle Centre, ASDA Supermarket, Belmont Road, Hereford HR2 7JE

Followed by:

BREXIT – opportunities and risks for the countryside

A FREE conference organised by the Herefordshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England

Friday 13th October 2017, 11.00 to 16.30.
Registration opens at 10.30 am

CPRE Herefordshire invites you to a FREE conference exploring the issues facing
the countryside following Brexit including:

- What the EU has done for the countryside?
- Environmental protection
- Farming for wildlife
- Woodlands
- Rivers
- Agricultural practice

A FREE BUFFET LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED

To book your FREE place now contact:
Barbara Bromhead-Wragg, Branch Administrator
admin@cpreherefordshire.org.uk 01873 892965

Booking for the conference is essential. Only 100 places.
Book NOW to avoid disappointment

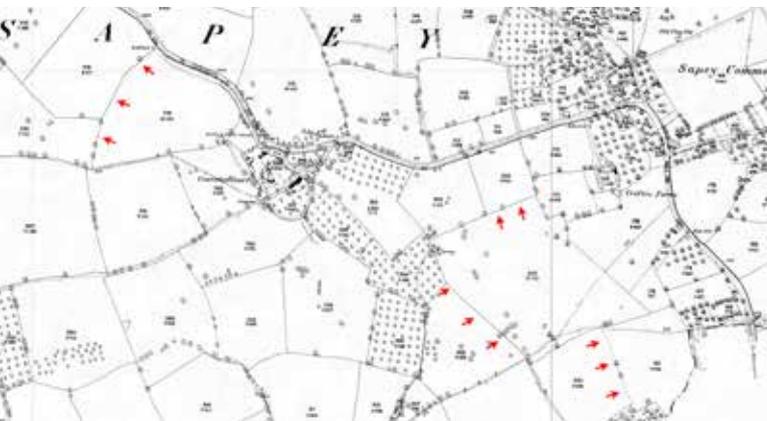
Volunteer with us

CPRE Herefordshire's core work is planning, advising members and the public on planning issues and frequently commenting on planning applications. We aim to protect the countryside and its villages, and land adjacent to urban areas from inappropriate development.

The branch has a very small core of planning volunteers, and we need more. New volunteers are always most welcome. Training and support are given and HCPRE volunteers operate a mentoring scheme. Whether your strengths lie in research, responding to planning applications or liaising with a member of the public, we need you!

If you are interested in joining HCPRE as a volunteer, please email Barbara at: admin@cpreherefordshire.org.uk or telephone Richard Williams: 01432 851438 if you would like to discuss this further.

HEDGEROWS



1st edition 25" to the mile OS map c1880



Courtesy Geoff Gwatkins

Herefordshire Council refused an application this spring to grub up almost 700 metres of established hedgerow on farmland at Upper Sapey, north of Bromyard (Planning Application P 171962/H). The proposal was vigorously opposed by HCPRE and provided the opportunity for us to refresh our knowledge of the legislation protecting hedgerows.

Important hedgerows are protected under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 which very clearly state that they must be protected and that a local planning authority will refuse permission for their removal. Section 5a of the Hedgerow Regulations defines an important hedgerow as one that is at least 30 years old and is at least one of the following:

- Marks all or part of a parish boundary that existed before 1850.
- Contains an archaeological feature such as a scheduled monument.
- Is completely or partly in or next to an archaeological site listed on the Historic Environment Record.
- Marks the boundary of an estate or manor or looks to be related to any building or other feature that's part of the estate or manor that existed before 1600.
- Is part of a field system or looks to be related to any building or other feature associated with the field system that existed before the Inclosure Acts (that is before 1845).

In addition, Natural England Guidance. Countryside Hedgerows: protection and management 2014 (updated November 2016) gives further criteria for defining protected hedgerows. A countryside hedgerow is protected if it is:

- a boundary line of trees and shrubs that at one time was a continuous line.
- more than 20m long with gaps of 20m or less in its length
- less than 20m long, but meets another hedge at each end
- less than 5m at its base
- on land used for agriculture or forestry

Furthermore, DEFRA guidance is that a hedgerow is important regardless of the current completeness of the historic field system.

The protected status of important hedgerows is not determined by its species composition, or how it has been maintained. Tightly flailed and gappy hedgerows are protected if they fulfil the above criteria.

In the Upper Sapey case we were able to demonstrate unequivocally, by reference to tithe maps and aerial photographs, that the threatened hedgerows predated the Inclosure Acts.

As this newsletter goes to press we await Herefordshire Council's decision on 3 further applications to grub up large sections of hedgerow on agricultural land; one in Bush Bank and two in Lingen. HCPRE has strongly opposed these using evidence from the tithe maps.

Richard Williams

THE FUTURE OF THE A49 THROUGH HEREFORDSHIRE

Highways England produced a new Route Strategy for the Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire in March. This includes the A49 from Wilton, near Ross on Wye, in the south of the county to Brimfield in the north where the road crosses into Shropshire.

The route strategy is part of Highways England's preparations for their second Road Investment Strategy through which it will secure Government funding for roads over the period 2020-2025. CPRE Herefordshire is concerned that this will lead to major road building along the A49 in the coming decade.

CPRE is not against road building where this is well planned, cost effective and provides long term solutions to major weaknesses in the English infrastructure. However, as the 2017 National CPRE report *'The impact of Road Projects in England'* shows, road schemes generate more traffic, rarely bring the promised benefits to the local economy and often have adverse environmental impacts. The report can be read at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/transport/roads/item/4543-the-end-of-the-road-challenging-the-road-building-consensus>

Locally we simply do not believe that the A49 through Herefordshire and Shropshire can ever be considered as a serious alternative 'route to the north' to the current motorways without huge expenditure and major damage to the wonderful environment and landscape of these rural counties. The support for massive road improvement schemes by bodies such as Herefordshire Council and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership is barely credible and this route simply cannot be regarded as a high priority given other national transport requirements. Major works along the A49 are not a good use of increasingly scarce national resources and would not represent value for money.

CPRE Herefordshire has written to Highways England suggesting that there are other, more cost-effective solutions to improve traffic circulation and road safety for all users within Hereford city if only Herefordshire Council would drop its fixation with grandiose new road schemes. Countywide there is a good case for improving the Newport to Manchester rail line parallel to the A49, particularly to take volumes of freight off the roads. Letters have also been sent to both local MP's, the National Audit office, the Minister for Transport and the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. All the town and parish councils along the A49 have also been contacted.

Dr Tony Geeson



A49 near Luston: *Richard Williams*

Waste Management Services and Charges

As part of its drive seeking to deliver savings of £87m between 2010 and 2020, Herefordshire Council is considering changes in waste management services and charges. CPRE has responded to the consultation and accepts that many of the proposals seem reasonable for the majority of people. However, we are concerned that anything that makes it more difficult or costly to dispose of waste will encourage irresponsible behaviour in a minority, exacerbating an already unacceptable situation with regard to litter and fly tipping. Ultimately, this may prove to be a false economy; any savings made by reducing waste services will be outweighed by the costs of collecting illegally dumped items and litter.

Richard Williams



Hereford Recycling Centre: *Richard Williams*

CHAIR'S REPORT 2017

Welcome to CPRE Herefordshire's Annual Report and Newsletter 2017.

As well as engaging in our usual core business of responding to planning applications the year has seen us active on many fronts. Spring and summer have been dominated by consultations on issues ranging from roads to how Herefordshire Council will deal with those parishes who are not progressing Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). Summaries of CPRE's responses are included in this newsletter.

We have held a very successful and well attended Workshop on dealing with the increasing flow of applications for Intensive Poultry Units, as reported in our Spring newsletter. It is gratifying that the issue of the adverse impacts of industrial farming practices has been given a wide airing, following features in The Guardian¹ and The Hereford Times² in July, which reported that Herefordshire has the greatest number of intensive livestock units per county in the UK.

A meeting in May with Patrick Wrixon, Chair of the Herefordshire National Farmers Union, was successful in drawing together a shared view on the issues facing agricultural policy post Brexit and this was expressed in a joint HCPRE/NFU letter to all prospective parliamentary candidates prior to the General Election.

May also saw the release of a film documenting the very successful Wildplay Project that was a joint venture between HCPRE and Herefordshire Wildlife Trust aimed at engaging children in an appreciation of landscape (see page 6).

Throughout the year we have been providing comment on draft NDPs to help ensure that parishes include policies that protect the landscape.

We have completed a major review of our policies and procedures. Of note, as you will see in our Treasurer's report, we have revised our reserves policy following receipt of two large legacies last year. This will enable us to raise our profile by hosting local events and to employ an Administrative Assistant specifically to manage our website and to set up and maintain our presence on social media platforms. We have also established a "fighting fund" for professional advice on large planning applications and for legal advice.

It gives me great pleasure to thank our Trustees and Volunteers for all their hard work and for their very much valued support during my first year in office. Our small

branch, collectively, has a huge amount of expertise and experience and functions very well as a team. Our meetings are lively, interesting and friendly and we welcome others to join as volunteers.

Special thanks to Peter Louis who retired as Honorary Treasurer after giving HCPRE 13 years of service. Despite continued ill health he has given a huge amount of time and energy to handing over all the complexities of the role to our new Treasurer and this has made for a very smooth transition.

No Chair's report would be complete without acknowledging the dedicated, efficient and cheerful support given by Barbara, our Administrator, who is often the first point of contact with the branch for members and the general public.

Last but by no means least our thanks are due to all our members and supporters without whom we would be unable to function. You not only keep us financially solvent but help to ensure that CPRE remains influential locally and nationally.

Our AGM on Friday 13th October this year is followed by a conference, "*Brexit – opportunities and risks for the countryside*" which promises to be a very interesting day with a number of nationally recognised speakers. We look forward to seeing you there!

Richard Williams
Chair

1. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jul/17/uk-has-nearly-800-livestock-mega-farms-investigation-reveals?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

2. http://www.herefordtimes.com/news/15424695.County_most_active_for_factory_farming_with_millions_of_animals_reared_indoors__map_shows/



TREASURER'S REPORT

The branch ended its financial year (to 31 December 2016) in a strong position, thanks to a very generous legacy of just under £78,000, from the late Ms. Barbara Edith Washbourne, a long-term Member, received in July 2016. As a result, the reserves totalled £99,000, as compared to just over £21,000 before the receipt of the legacy.

On the current account, the Branch made a loss of £1,588, a large part of which was due to the cost (£955), of advertising for a new Chair. The Branch maintains a Business Management account of just over £16,000 to cover any shortfall on current expenditure, so there was no need to draw on our reserves. I consider the Branch's current expenditure to be well managed, with no unnecessary items or wasteful spending. For this result, I wish to thank the Trustees, and, in particular, the Branch Administrator, Barbara Bromhead-Wragg, for their careful monitoring of expenses.

In the current year, the Trustees are considering how to make best use of our financial position, and the plans for doing so are set out in the Chair's report. The first draft of our budget shows that it will not be necessary to draw on our reserves to meet current expenditure, so that the Branch is in a position to make strategic use of the unanticipated boost to our reserves given by the Washbourne legacy.

I am very grateful to Thorne Widgery Chartered Accountants for examining the annual accounts, a service they have provided for a number of years.

Finally, I wish to thank Peter Louis, who retired as Treasurer in February 2017. Peter had served as an exemplary Treasurer since 2004 and the accounts were in immaculate shape. I agreed to be a temporary one year Treasurer (until the end of February 2018), with the invaluable help of Nicola Forde as Book-keeper. A replacement Treasurer is being sought, and any suggestions from Members or supporters will be very welcome.

Patrick Goode
Treasurer



Harvesters near Westhild: *Richard Williams*

SHALE GAS: UPDATE ON FRACKING

In June, National Office revised the policy guidance note on Shale Gas. CPRE now supports a moratorium on shale gas extraction in England unless it can be clearly demonstrated that fracking would:

- Help secure the radical reductions in carbon emissions required to comply with planning policy and meet legally binding climate change targets.
- Not lead to unacceptable cumulative harm to particular landscapes or to the countryside generally.
- Be carefully controlled by effective systems of regulation and democratic planning which are adequately resourced locally and nationally.

This represents a significant hardening of CPRE's line which previously emphasised that the burdens of proving that there were no harmful consequences lay with the promoters of fracking for gas - the precautionary principle.

There are two main climate change arguments. First, the UK's Committee on Climate Change chaired by John Gummer advises that gas usage already needs to reduce and second, that investment in fracking could divert funding from more sustainable energy technologies.

The main environmental arguments are heavy traffic during construction and operation phases (once built each 'pad' could last 20 years), cumulative impact of multiple sites and industrialisation of the countryside. There is also the threat of development once extraction has ceased if the sites were treated as previously developed land.

CPRE is also concerned about funding cuts to the UK's environmental regulators and their legal duty to prioritise economic growth that was imposed from December 2016. Mineral Planning Authorities – Local Councils – have less funding and may lack experienced staff while the Government now has the power to take decisions away from them.

The full guidance note proposes seven measures CPRE considers necessary if the Government does ever decide to encourage large scale fracking and these can be read at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/policy-guidance-notes/item/4608-policy-guidance-note-shale-gas>

Locally the company that was awarded licences to explore areas to the south of Ross on Wye has decided not to proceed. They consider that other areas in South Wales represent a better investment. This presumably means that these areas will be offered again in any future licensing round.

Dr Tony Geeson

KINGTON'S PLAYFUL LANDSCAPES



“It makes me feel happy”, the words of one of the children describing her feelings about playing in the countryside. She was taking part in a joint project of Herefordshire CPRE and the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. Funded by Awards for All, the Playful Landscapes Project aimed to increase awareness of young people about the landscape they live in, giving a sense of local pride and encouraging them to explore and play freely.

Encouraging access to nature and the freedom to roam in wild places is known to bring significant health and well-being benefits to children. Yet we found local children were not aware of many of the places in their area where they could roam freely and play. They also had a limited knowledge of the natural history of their area and of how landscape changes over time. A Natural England report found that less than 10% of children today play in natural places such as woodlands, countryside and heaths, when compared with 40% of children 30–40 years ago.

Working with children from Kington Primary School, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's WildPlay unit invited grandparents into the school to talk about their childhood growing up in Kington. They were interviewed by the children about where they played and how the landscape has changed. The children learned how certain parts of the landscape have been a mainstay through the generations, and how farming and development has changed the landscape for people and wildlife.

The children were taken on trips around the local area to compare how the landscape has changed from their grandparents' time and visited the places where their grandparents played. They took part in WildPlay activities, such as playing in streams, bug hunting, whittling, and team games and on walks to view points, like Hergest Ridge, to view the whole expanse of the Kington area.

The children worked with Catcher Media to produce a film of the project and a map highlighting the important natural and play-friendly features of the town has also

been produced for children, families and tourists to use in future.

Young people are the future guardians of the countryside but in the words of David Attenborough: “No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced.”

Our thanks go to Kington Primary School, the parents, grandparents and children, and Jo Dainty of Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's WildPlay team for making it happen. Do watch the film, it will make you happy.

'Kington's Playful Landscapes' can be viewed online - <http://www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk/index.aspx>

Bob Widdowson

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs): What will happen to those communities not producing one?

This summer has seen yet another Herefordshire Council consultation, this one looking at the issues and options for those areas in Herefordshire where an NDP is not being progressed.

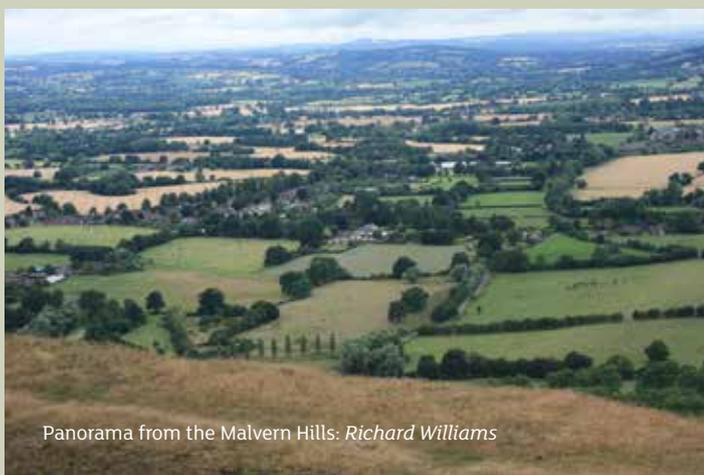
The Rural Site Allocations Development Plan Document (RASA DPD) was published in June by Herefordshire Council. Unlike NDPs, which are produced by the local community, the RASA DPD will be produced by Herefordshire Council and will involve a number of consultation events and engagement with statutory bodies. Also, whilst the intention is to engage with the local community and parish councils, the RASA DPD will not be subject to a referendum.

HCPRE has responded in detail to this first consultation. We are very supportive of NDPs and pleased that 108 parishes (88%) have engaged with the process. We are also broadly supportive of this initiative to prepare plans to cover areas not covered by a locally prepared NDP. However, below are some of our chief concerns:

- We believe it is essential that local people are involved to **the maximum** in the development of any plan for their settlement and community. Any other approach would be contrary to the spirit of neighbourhood planning and the Government's localism agenda.
- Affordable housing is an extreme problem for rural areas and is needed to enable younger people to live in rural settlements. It is important that plans deliver the type of development that is needed and sites specifically allocated for affordable housing should be prioritised. If housing is delivered through small sites, by developers, the affordability issue will not be addressed. We propose a requirement that all new build includes a minimum number of affordable houses after which a developer could produce market price dwellings.

- Whilst we accept the preference for settlement boundaries where appropriate, we have argued the case for criteria-based policies for potential development sites in dispersed rural settlements where settlement boundaries are unfeasible.
- The principle of proportionate development is problematic for very rural areas and dispersed settlements. In order for development to be sustainable there must be an assessment of where development would be most appropriate. The settlement pattern in Herefordshire and the substandard transport infrastructure mean that it is unlikely that many of the listed settlements will be suitable for development.
- The DPD should be worded in a way that actively encourages highest quality design and build, sustainable methods of construction and carbon neutrality as well as non-conventional methods of delivery e.g. community land trusts, self-build etc. suitable for small local builders/groups in these most rural areas.
- We propose an additional policy to protect the landscape - there should be very careful consideration of the siting and design of all types of development so as to enhance and not degrade the rural setting.
- In particular it will be important to ensure a clear separation between the urban edge and the rural hinterland and policies should be developed to ensure that business units/retail parks are carefully sited and contained and do not sprawl into surrounding countryside. CPRE National Office has recently published such a policy – July 2017 – which could form a template for a local landscape policy.

Richard Williams



Panorama from the Malvern Hills: *Richard Williams*

Identifying and conserving countryside assets through Neighbourhood Development Plans

On 27th June 2017 a presentation on “**Riverside biodiversity through Breinton, Hereford: identification, monitoring and conservation**” was given to a meeting of the Wye and Usk Catchment Partnership on behalf of Breinton Parish Council. This illustrated the rich biodiversity and variety of wildlife habitats along this stretch of the River Wye Special Area of Conservation and SSSI adjacent to Hereford city, and discussed some threats to conservation and the landscape.

Breinton Springs, (including ancient Breinton Wood, a traditional orchard, a meadow and a pond) is a site managed by the National Trust, and is a popular recreational destination for Herefordians. The long-distance Wye Valley Walk along the river bank reaches here, through Broomy Hill and Warham from central Hereford, less than 2 miles away. To the west of Breinton Springs there are private gardens and parkland where public access to the river is not possible.

The river bank hosts some unusual plant species such as giant bellflower, small teasel, stinking iris, and pink purslane. Small-flowered buttercup grows on the meadows of Warham. In the ancient woodland on the steep slopes of a former river-cliff there are some oaks, ash and field maples at least 200 years old, with wild daffodils, bluebells, wood anemones, early purple orchids, common spotted orchids, toothwort and goldilocks buttercups among the ground flora. There are several ponds with great crested newts close to the river. The wide variety of birds includes lesser spotted woodpeckers, cuckoos, hobbies, peregrines and kingfishers.

Natural changes in the river can be a substantial challenge to wildlife. Flooding can wash away plants and animals, also removing some food sources and obstructing burrows. Conversely, at times of low water some burrows and fauna (including fish) may be more visible to predators, and wetland plants may experience water stress. In addition pollutants/nutrients may become concentrated, causing e.g. algal blooms.

A third threat for Breinton is the proposed western bypass that would cross the River Wye here; bringing noise, lights from car headlights, vibration, vehicle emissions, and soil damage and erosion etc. to an area that is currently so rich in species; secluded and tranquil, with dark skies. The water supply for Hereford could also be affected.

Identification of Breinton’s wildlife assets was carried out for **Breinton’s Neighbourhood Development Plan**. Biodiversity is much richer than official records suggest. This additional knowledge allows monitoring of any significant changes, and consideration of measures to minimise threats, including local planning policies. It would be great if more parishes could take on a similar role for nature conservation, and share biological data in the same way as Breinton Parish Council at: <http://breintonparish.co.uk/about-breinton/breintons-wildlife/>

Dr Nichola Geeson

Hereford Area Plan & Local Transport Plan: HCPRE response to consultation

Consultation on the Hereford Area Plan (HAP) and Hereford Transport Package (HTP) took place in April and May. The Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy which sets out the overall vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the County, was adopted in October 2015. The HAP will set out detailed proposals for Hereford City, whilst the HTP contains two main elements:

- A western bypass, whose exact route is still undetermined and which Herefordshire Council hopes will support the delivery of 6,500 new homes, 6,000 new jobs, a new University and the expansion of the Hereford Enterprise Zone at Rotherwas.
- Walking, cycling and public transport improvements.

Our response to the consultation included the following key points:

Hereford Area Plan

Hereford's unique setting must be preserved to avoid the townscape spilling out into the surrounding landscape by including policies for:

- Protection of views into and from the city which are a particular feature of its setting.
- Providing a clear distinction between urban and green space.
- Providing a green 'lung' around the whole urban area and not just to the east where the Lugg Meadows perform this function.
- Respecting the agricultural value of top grade soils.
- A 'brownfield first, greenfield last' approach – to protect the countryside and regenerate urban areas. This should include all previously developed land and not just formally defined brownfield areas.

There is a need to address affordable housing through innovative approaches such as Community Land Trusts and self-build.

Contact CPRE Herefordshire:

Email: admin@cpreherefordshire.org.uk

By post: c/o 19, Pine Grove, Sunningdale Estate, Knightwick WR6 5PP

Monthly Branch Meetings

11.00am every second Tuesday at RVS, Vicarage Road, Hereford HR1 2QN. ALL WELCOME.

Guidelines should be produced to address high quality design enabling higher building densities and adaptability to changing needs and circumstances.

The opportunity to engage the city with the surrounding countryside should be taken, utilising green fingers radiating out from the city such as walks along the River Wye, and better links to the Lugg Flats and Dinedor. This is natural, green infrastructure that does not need creating from scratch.

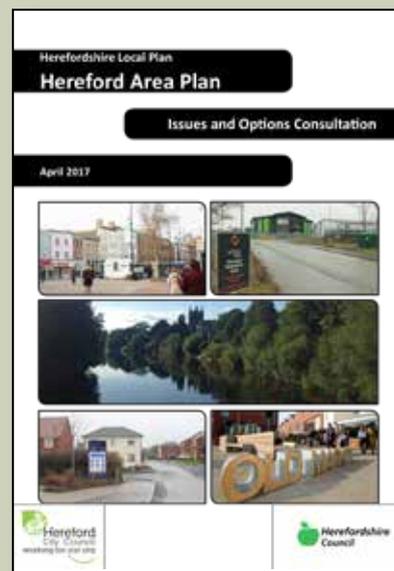
There should be policies to prevent the spread of retail development, especially large and unsightly warehouse style units. In particular, such development should not be allowed to spread to the outskirts of the city where they ruin the visual approaches to the built form. There are several underused retail areas in the centre of Hereford with many premises lying empty. The focus should be on gaining full retail occupancy in existing retail areas. A properly diverse retail choice should be offered, not just more global chains, and there should be less emphasis on restaurants.

Policies are needed to minimise pollution from land use. Runoff from agricultural land and from hard surfaces (roads, car parks etc.) must be prevented from reaching water courses, such as Yazor brook and Widemarsh Brook, and they should be monitored with a Nutrient Management Plan in a similar way as that for the Rivers Wye and Lugg. If thousands of new homes are built, then even if active and sustainable travel measures succeed, the net level of pollution in Hereford city is likely to increase. The Nutrient Management Plan should be given real teeth with a policy to remove any possibility that development will add to the pollution of the Wye catchment which is protected as a Special Area of Conservation.

Hereford Transport Package

HCPRE's stance on the proposed western by-pass was reiterated and has been the subject of several recent newsletters. There is a lack of connectivity for efficient journeys where cycle lanes don't join up in a satisfactory way, or where obvious routes to walk, cycle, or bus between key destinations are missing. Lower-cost sustainable transport options should be tried before very expensive new road options. Measures that prioritise cars are not sustainable.

Richard Williams



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

CPRE Herefordshire
www.cpreherefordshire.org.uk

Chair: Richard Williams, Secretary: David Phelps, Treasurer: Patrick Goode
Registered Charity No. 213951