



The countryside charity Shropshire

Chairman's Annual Report 2020/21

Introduction

The last year has been without a doubt one of the most significant and challenging of modern times and we have all learnt so much from it and given us even more to think about when it comes to the ambitions for our climate.

The beginning of 2020 brought us to adapt to new ways of working, which included professionals working from home and local government, charities and businesses adapting to virtual meetings. It has, of course, been a very sad time as we have lost so many loved ones. But, without dawning too much, it would be useful to look deeper into the changes that have been made that could help us tackle the biggest threat our globe will face to its climate.

With video conference meetings it's meant less cars on the road. For CPRE this has been very helpful as we are not travelling hundreds of miles for County and Regional meetings anymore, which can be in excess of 15+ cars on the road a time. Of course a lot of the venues previously hired will be hit if we continue to operate like this so some thoughtful thinking will need to be had by all to support our communities and reduce our carbon footprint at the same time.

The national scale of CPRE The countryside charity

In the early part of 2021 we saw our annual star count receive the most amount of submissions we've ever received, a total of 7,845 counts were completed across the UK. This data showed that 5% of participants counted more than 30 stars, indicating truly dark skies. This was our highest figure of dark skies accounted for since 2013. And the count of people seeing less than 10 stars dropped by 10% from the previous year. A large indicator to this will likely be due to the significantly reduced number of air traffic and sites with floodlights and billboards being operated due to the pandemic.

At a national scale our charity has been working very hard to press policy changes and we have seen the introduction of the new Agriculture Act and we gathered over 310,000 signatures to persuade the government to abandon green belt threatening legislation in the White Paper.

We have also been hugely successful in campaigning for a Bottle Deposit Return Scheme in England, which in 2018 we launched our ambitions for the scheme in Telford. However, while the government gave their intentions in 2020 to rollout a scheme they have now delayed this to possibly 2024. Needless to say we will keep up this fight.

New research by CPRE also shows how every village, every hour, can have a reliable rural bus service. You can find more details of this research and all our campaign on CPRE's websites either locally or nationally.

Our work in Shropshire

I cannot begin to thank our local team enough for all that they have done and are doing to tackle challenges to our environment from all angles.

We've been tremendously tackling the Local Plan Review for Shropshire through our Planning Spokesperson Charles Green and our local groups have been keeping busy hot on the heels of developments that threaten green spaces in Telford, Shrewsbury and surrounding areas of Shropshire.

Our fantastic team of volunteers are continuing to work on rural bus service campaigns, encouraging carbon neutral urban development, tackling the battle against litter and maintaining the protection of historical buildings.

We've also been teaming up with new initiatives like the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership and the Telford & Wrekin Climate Action Working Group to share ideas of how best to tackle the climate issues in our county.

One of the most proud moments of the last year in my eyes is the work of our Branch Manager Sarah Jameson who, with the help of Rob Lowe at the Middle Marches Community Land Trust, has secured our largest grant funding in recent times to create or restore hedgerows across Shropshire and we've had a staggering number of people come forward to offer their land as a place to conduct this wildlife encouraging work across Shropshire.

Looking forward

Last year we launched our CPRE Shropshire Strategic Plan, which sets out our local branches vision for how we are going to grow and support a wider variety of issues and people in Shropshire and we encourage all Councils in the county to have a read of it which can be found on our website.

As we enter 2021 we will continue to be focused on another year of environmental wins that benefit everyone, no matter where you live. And to do this we need more volunteers supporting our work.

If you'd like to volunteer with CPRE or hear more about our organisation please contact us, because together we can achieve so much more.



Connor Furnival
Chairman of CPRE Shropshire

www.cpreshropshire.org.uk