



Welcome to the Autumn edition of Shropshire Voice

CPRE Shropshire has been busy behind the scenes since our last Newsletter and I'm delighted to report that our AGM went very well at Acton Scott in June and we now have a new President in the shape of Sir Neil Cossons, OBE.

I would like to sincerely thank Robin Thompson for taking up the role of President some 6 years ago and supporting our branch over that time. I'm pleased to say he will remain a Trustee of the Shropshire branch.

The Hedgerow Project is now well into its third year with our Branch Manager, Sarah Jameson, at the helm and doing all project co-ordination. Several training events have already taken place and all activities seem to book up very well so interest remains high. The winter months will be focussed on all-important hedge creation and I'm really pleased that Sarah has been able to get the involvement of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust for hedge planting in the north of the county. You can find more about the hedge project inside the newsletter.

Charles Green continues to do all the heavy lifting work for the branch on the planning side of things and we are indebted to him for this hard work and focus on the more technical aspects of planning in the county. He is also now our Treasurer.

I attend the CPRE Chairs' chat via Teams every month, the Assembly quarterly on line and the West Midlands Regional Committee meetings on line.

As a branch we have attended a variety of indoor and outdoor events this season including the Green Fair in Ludlow (July), Hay Meadow Festival, Craven Arms (July), Burwarton Show (August), Middle Marches Community Land Trust conferences (June and October) and an excellent 'green day' in Market Drayton in September.

Susan Lockwood
Chair, CPRE Shropshire

Photo: guests viewing a young Hereford calf at Acton Scott Historic Working Farm in June (c) Sarah Jameson

CPRE Shropshire Planning Update

Charles Green, CPRE Shropshire Planning Spokesperson

Planning matters affecting Shropshire arrive on our desk relentlessly and repeatedly! Some of them have been going on for years, others are more recent.

Shropshire Council Local Plan Review

One that many of you are aware has been going on for years (since January 2017!) is Shropshire Council's Local Plan Review, covering the period 2016 to 2038. It was submitted for examination over two years ago, in September 2021, and face-to-face and then (because of Covid) remote sessions were held in July 2022. Since then, things have stalled over the treatment of the unmet need from the Black Country that has been included in the plan (1,500 houses and 30Ha of employment land). Shropshire Council thinks it can be included in its overall "requirement" of 30,800 houses (which anyway is some 16% greater than need under the Government's standard formula). The Inspectors, and the Bradford Estate team (with an eye on their M54 Junction 3 proposals for a large new village), think it should be extra to that figure. So, the process has again stalled after the Inspectors sent the Council away for a second time to have a rethink. We currently await news of when the results of that rethinking exercise will become available. In the meantime, the current plan slips nearer and nearer to being out of date.

Telford & Wrekin Council Local Plan Review

And now Telford & Wrekin Council has just launched a consultation on its re-started Local Plan, which runs for 11 weeks until 12 January 2024. Its earlier stage, Issues and Options, was consulted on in 2021. T&WC have a housing requirement of 20,200 houses in the plan period of 2020 to 2040, compared with a need of only around half of that under the Government's standard formula. They say that over 11,000 of these houses are already in the planning pipeline, so based on demography, they don't need any more houses. They don't overtly state that any of these extra houses are to meet unmet need in the Black Country, or in Birmingham, which has even greater unmet need. Most of the new houses would be on the fringes of Telford town. Their policies generally seem to be "greener" than Shropshire Council's, including a requirement that major developments should deliver in excess of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, in advance of it formally becoming a legal requirement.

Renewables

If the UK is to meet its carbon reduction targets then, at the moment, renewable energy has an important role to play. It may also help with energy security. However, its deployment here is, generally, unlikely to make any significant difference to the UK's climate, which is determined by wider global

factors. Renewable energy in the form of wind or solar power also has the disadvantage of being intermittent and of low thermal density. Its requirements for materials to construct it are much higher per unit of output than conventional sources, including nuclear. These factors, which have a bearing on the use and exploitation of the earth's resources, should be more transparently evidenced in any consultation or planning application. The concentration on climate change reduction may not in the end be the whole story. The intermittency, as well as current lack of grid connections, also means that many more pylon lines will be required in the UK and that is starting to become evident, as noted in the Oswestry report.

Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (NWRR)

Many of you will know that the Northern Planning Committee resolved at its meeting on 31 October to pass the NWRR, but required that the 36 planning conditions be brought back to committee. That in itself may cause considerable delay. Objectors were also considering calling-in the decision and/or seeking a Judicial Review. The threat to Shrewsbury's drinking water supply, sources of which the road sails right over, were skirted around and are yet to be thrashed out with the Environment Agency. Over half of the 218-page Committee report for the meeting repeated almost verbatim the comments of the various statutory consultees, but spent less than four pages summarising the 5,300 objection comments, which is an absolutely extraordinary number, partly encouraged by Better Shrewsbury Transport (BeST), the main campaigning group (of which we are members). The Government's decision to scrap the northern part of HS2 has the spin-off that it says part of the moneys so saved will be used to "fully fund" the NWRR. The fine detail of how these saved HS2 funds will be used has not yet been released and when pressed, the Government did say that the schemes they listed were just examples of what might be done. The NWRR may yet fail when it comes to submitting the "Full Business Case" to Government, when costings may come home to roost.

Flooding, and land use

Storm Babet has reminded many Shropshire folk, as if we needed reminding, of the recurring threats from flooding. In fact, we fared better than parts of the country further north. The Environment Agency, with its Severn Valley Water Management Scheme and River Severn Partnership, has recently given out that there will be a consultation early next year on its long-emerging ideas on how to hold flood water back. Part of the gain and benefit they offer is likely to be more development!

**Charles Green
Planning Spokesperson**

Rural transport update

The big news is the sale of Arriva – which currently runs the majority of bus services in Shropshire – to US private equity firm ISquared by German state operator Deutsche Bahn. This may or may not be good news, since Deutsche Bahn managed to run a pretty unsatisfactory service in Shropshire, including closing the Oswestry bus depot. On the other hand, a US private equity firm is not likely to care any more than Deutsche Bahn about the quality of its service, as opposed to the amount of its profits.

A ‘bus summit’ held in Oswestry in August by Helen Morgan, the local MP shed more light on the way in which our bus services are organised. It was attended by representatives of users & operators – except Arriva.

The meeting discussed the mechanics & economics of running rural bus services. The point was made that none of the services currently running in Shropshire – few & far between as many of them are – were viable without public subsidy.

The lack of good services connecting the towns was highlighted. (It appears that the National Express service which used to run to Oswestry was withdrawn some time ago & now runs from Shrewsbury).

It also appears that services which go ‘cross border’ ie into another county, lose their subsidy at the ‘border,’ unlike services run by Transport for Wales.

Bus operators apparently choose the routes they wish to operate, and are not permitted to cross subsidise by the Competition Authority, which seems completely counterintuitive.

Given that all routes are currently subsidized, there is surely an argument for Shropshire Council to be proactive in identifying the routes which are most essential & offering a subsidy for those – on the he who pays the piper principle.

In other news, the £2 cap on bus fares continues, and will presumably keep going until the next General Election.

Finally, CPRE is producing a number of policy papers in advance of the General Election, including a transport statement., which we have been asked to comment on. **You can access the document on our website at www.cpreshropshire.org.uk - look under Issues/Public Transport.**

**Elizabeth Jones
Public Transport**

Oswestry district update

The big news is the Government announcement of support for the Gobowen rail link – supposedly to be funded by the money from the cancelled HS2 project. Latest cost projections are reported as £5m-£14m, with £190k of annual running costs. That presumably excludes the cost of crossing the A483. Excitement is running high – and more consultants are being brought in to report - but is it too cynical to see the list of projects across the North and Midlands as early electioneering? None of them will be in place before a General Election.

Otherwise, Helen Morgan, MP for North Shropshire, held a ‘bus summit’ on August 23rd in Oswestry, attended by two representatives of CPRE Shropshire together with representatives of Shropshire Council, Lakeside & Tanat Valley bus operators, a voluntary bus operator and BusUsers Shropshire plus Climate Action. Arriva were noticeable by their absence. For more details see the Rural Transport report.

In other news, the ‘Cycle Hub’ in the Old Market Hall is now open only on a Wednesday morning, which seems a waste of a prime retail site, and new traffic calming measures on Church Street resulted in an initial outbreak of slips and trips amongst pedestrians, the attendance of at least two ambulances and the blocking of the roadway. Regrettably, the problem of traffic in Church Street seems not yet to have been resolved.

Finally, the HAZ (Heritage Action Zone) funded shopfronts in Cross Street have been unveiled and look much better than the old ones. Other retailers on the street have now started asking for their shopfronts to be upgraded in similar fashion, so clearly HAZ has started a trend.

Recently, the old plans were resurrected for a long pylon line through North Shropshire (connecting proposed mid-Wales windfarms with the National Grid near Lower Frankton), albeit in a modified and moderated version. The preferred line is slightly different to that proposed by National Grid back in 2011, and the pylons will be 26 metres high, not 50 metres. The promoter is Bute Energy, a relatively new boy on the block, who want to go it alone with their wind farms and pylon line, and part of our response to their consultation on the plans criticized them for not collaborating with others in the cross-national UK interest.

**Elizabeth Jones & Charles Green,
Oswestry District Group**

Heritage report

Historic/traditional buildings in our countryside are currently facing the most major threat for decades to their character and the way that they function on a daily basis. This is manifesting itself in the government drive for these buildings to become more energy efficient.

Unfortunately in Government parlance every building is deemed to be identical in terms of the nature of the retrofit it is to be given whether it is a 1970s flat in an urban area or a 17th century stone farmhouse. This is set against a background of standard EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) which also uses incorrect calculations for how older materials like stone resist the loss of heat. Extensive research has been done by Historic England and SPAB to illustrate that the EPC parameters are incorrect but this does not seem to be recognised by Councils or Government.

A large number of retrofit installers and designers insist on using Celotex for insulation because it is guaranteed in terms of its thermal resistance, but it

is totally impermeable and will not allow the removal of moist air from the building. As most traditional buildings have a higher relative humidity than modern buildings this will ultimately be very detrimental and lead to their decline. Other modern materials used for insulation include for example silica based products such as Aerogel. The permeability of this is unknown as is its potential for longevity. This latter point is very relevant.

There has really been insufficient research on many of these modern insulation materials. Currently it is unknown whether wood fibre boards will be affected by dry rot when set against moderately damp stone walls.

In view of all of this the Heritage Adviser has been concentrating on discussions with IHBC (Institute of Historic Building Conservation) and with local groups such as the Marches Energy Trust.

Carole Ryan-Ridout
Heritage Officer



These images show the contrast in building construction between a 1970s block of flats and a medieval or later stone farmhouse could not be greater.

It therefore stands to reason that they demand very different types of insulation to cope with the differing performance of the wall structure, permeable sheep's wool for the stone versus Celotex for the modern brick.

In addition whilst the character of the flats would not be marred by external wall insulation the same approach used for the stone would result in a severe loss of character.



Geology in Shropshire: We need your help!

I should like to remind readers that, as the geology lead in Shropshire CPRE, I am still hoping to recruit people in my quest to track the path of Ice Age ice flows in the county, with the aid of some citizen science.

As you know during the many Ice Ages in the last two million years, our county was assaulted by many advances of ice which dumped their loads of rocks where they melted. We know that ice came from several directions by the variety of rocks in the boulder clay (the 'sludge' left by the ice which makes for the fertile soils in the county) and by erratic rocks often used for millennium markers and decorative features in our villages.

The research is appropriate to the North Shropshire plains especially as it is not complicated by the various bedrocks on which the clay rests, as on the plains the bedrock is mostly the red Triassic sandstones, easily distinguished, and liassic deposits, all buff coloured.

A number of people have signed up, but not nearly enough to make the survey statistically significant so, if you are looking for a winter project, please walk your local and not-so-local fields (and recruit others too), recently ploughed but not yet sown, and look carefully at the multiple types of geology in the stones. These will vary from shales and slates from Wales to granites and schists from the north. Quartz is universal so not a great indicator.

Take part! See what to do in the brown box below.

Next talk: The Building Stones of Shropshire

At the end of March 2024, I will be delivering my fourth annual geology lecture on Zoom.

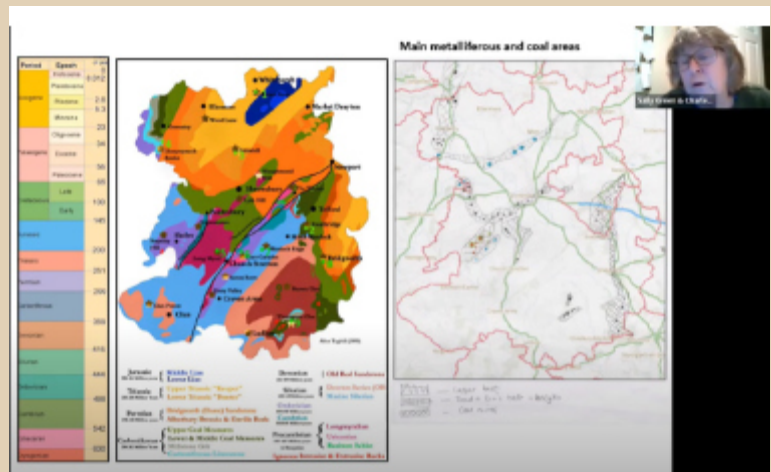
This time I will look at the many building stones of the county and how they affect the vernacular of buildings, and the quarries that supply them and how the geology determines the character of the villages round the county. I will also touch on how the clays affect brick making, the most used universal building material around our farms and villages, and how the spread of mass transport and modern economy has affected our new housing construction.

I will also look at both redundant quarries and at aggregate producing quarries still in use and how this affects our landscape ...think, the Criggion quarry (in Wales but visible all over north Shropshire), the sharpstone quarry south of Shrewsbury, and Grinshill, responsible for famous buildings, including the lintels and door surround at 10 Downing Street.

Sally Green

The Mines of Shropshire

Sally gave her annual geology talk on Zoom in March when she examined the Mines of Shropshire and we had a wide-ranging talk on the minerals of the county and where, and how they have been mined over the centuries and how this has affected the landscape.



Take Part!

On your Shropshire walks, please graph a variety of rocks with their precise location (OS grid reference, GPS location or What3Words) and send your photos to us at CPRE on: admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk - or to me (Sally) at whippleGW@outlook.com.

CPRE Shropshire Hedgerow Project

The Hedgerow project is now in its third year and as well as planning on planting around 5km of new, native mixed hedgerow in the Shropshire countryside again this year, we have been running a series of training events through the summer and autumn.

We would love to see some Shropshire members attending, so do contact Sarah Jameson if you wish to come along or help us with planting from early December onwards.

Hedgerow Surveying workshops

Megan Gimber, self confessed hedge-nerd from the People's Trust for Endangered Species travelled up to Shropshire from her houseboat near Watford to run two hedgerow surveying workshops for us, one at High Leasowes meadows (recently purchased for the community via the Middle Marches Community Land Trust), the other in our field here at New Invention. Both workshops were booked up with 25 participants apiece - a mix of farmers, landowners, conservation groups and organisations, reserve volunteers and NGOs. An hour or two of theory inside was followed in both cases by a field hedge walk, looking at hedge health and structure and learning how to complete a hedgerow survey form. Such information is invaluable to inform landowners of future management.

Hedgerow Management workshops

We invited Nigel Adams to once again come up to run two workshops for us looking at hedgerow management in more detail. Again both workshops were booked up well with over 20 participants each. Theory, again was followed up with farm walks looking at a variety of hedges from the brand new to the faltering old. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the first workshop at all due to illness and only able to get to the walk on the second day, when we toured Bob James' farm on the slopes of Caer Caradoc looking at the hedgerow and tree management he has been undertaking for many years. A pleasure to see it done with so much care and devotion and knowledge. Bob also set the fiendishly tricky Tree Quiz we put on at Burwarton Show this year.

Hedgelaying for beginners workshops

Due to demand we have put on an extra hedgelaying workshop this season and will be holding four 2-day workshops in all with one follow up 1-day improvers day. We are laying a lovely 'easy' hedge at Pennerley, south Shropshire this year on a farm committed to regenerative farming principles.

Coppice Management workshops

We were planning on running just one of these but they have proved so popular we are running an extra two. Richard Thomason is the tutor for these. He manages woodland on the Westhope estate and is an experienced coppicer. We are much looking forward to the workshops which start in early November.

Hedgerow Arts workshops

Something a bit different this year - arts workshops! We planned one per season on different sites. Two have taken place so far - on cyanotype and gelli monoprinting, both using plant material from hedge and field walks to create prints. These workshops are being run by Andrew Howe, an experienced artist and community arts leader and the hedge walks are led by Rob Rowe, local ecologist and fungi expert.

The next two workshops will be on the dates below (let Sarah know if you would like to come along - they are free but with limited numbers):

**Whitegates Farm, Moreton Wood
(near Market Drayton), 6th Feb 2024:
Collage and artist books**

**Brickyard Farm, Wheathill
(nr Bridgnorth), 16th April 2024:
Natural inks and mark making**

Hedge Creation

We have spent over 3 months preparing for hedge creation and have visited and assessed 25 sites over that time. Most of these will be planted up with a mixed species native hedgerow over the winter months with the help of our wonderful volunteers. The whips will come from Bucknell Nurseries in the south of the county who have been a great supporter of the project over 3 years.

In the North of the county we are delighted to let you know we have teamed up with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust to deliver a further 1.8km of new hedgerow there too again with volunteer help.

**Sarah Jameson
Project Co-ordinator
Keep up with the project at:
www.cpreshropshire.org.uk/hedgerow-project**





A successful 2023 AGM

Our AGM this year was held at Acton Scott Historic Working Farm (now to be called Acton Scott Heritage Farm) on 15th June 2023. Francis and Alison Acton gave a presentation about the history and possible future of the farm and invited ideas and thoughts from the audience about the farm's future name and ways of working. After a delicious finger buffet supplied by Saxtons Deli of Church Stretton, we wandered out in to the lovely warm summer evening sunshine, split into two groups and enjoyed a guided walk to the magical Quarry Garden, taking in the magnificent farm yard and the beautiful Elizabethan house and grounds.

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