

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**3 June 2016**

**Held at the Parish Church of St Michael, Linby**

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| * **Apologies for Absence**   Apologies were received from Tony Benton, Mary Cunningham, Ian and Vanessa Johnson, Rosemary Jordan, Mary Stokes, Hoveringham Parish Council (via the Clerk, Jill Richards), Dorinda Miller, Mary Mackie, Tom Butcher, David Hunt, Geoffrey Littlejohns, Claire Riggall, Mrs L Howard, Lady Nall. |
| * **Minutes of 2015 Annual General Meeting**   The minutes were approved, subject to Mr Graham Leigh-Browne pointing out that he had suggested that the Best Kept Village Competition population categories should be reconsidered. The chair said that this point would be inserted into the minutes and that the matter would be considered when the Competition is next reviewed. |
| * **Report from Chairman**   The chair recorded the sad fact that Peter Winstanley, a long standing previous member of the Committee had died in May 2016 and that his widow had also died a few weeks later. Bettina Lange, Policy Adviser, would be saying more about the contribution that Peter had made to the work of CPRE when she came to speak later.  There was a number of “thank you”s that the Chair wished to impart. He recorded the pleasure and privilege of having Mr Liell Francklin, Deputy Lieutenant of the County and our Branch President with us at our AGM and looked forward to him addressing the meeting at the close of business. The chair expressed the gratitude of members to Councillor Stephen Walker for leading some members present on a most interesting walk around part of Moor Pond Wood before the meeting. We were fortunate to be allowed to hold our meeting in Linby Parish Church which had clearly been beautifully restored. CPRE Nottinghamshire was continually grateful to Wilkinsons for the generous sponsorship they gave each year to the Best Kept Village Competition. This year we had received sponsorship from NFU Mutual in money (£200) and postage facilities that had enabled us to send out our latest newsletter to all members in its printed format. The work of the branch could not be carried out except with the valuable contribution of each member of our executive committee and the chair expressed his gratitude for the support he had received from each one. He also mentioned the Best Kept Village Competition judges and the fact that the branch only operated because of the support we received from each of our members.  The Chair referred to his statement in the published Annual report for 2015 and said that, since he hoped that members would have read this, he did not propose to simply repeat its content. However, there are one or two points in that Report upon which he thought he might usefully add some further comment.  Mention was made in the report of the 2015 Valerie Gillespie Award for a community initiative to improve the environment at a city centre school. This prompted him to refer to the forthcoming appointment of Emma Bridgewater, the pottery designer and business woman, as the national President of CPRE. She has made it clear that, she wants, in her own words, “to encourage continuing development on suitable brown field sites and so help drive the dynamism that development will bring to our towns and cities – and in doing so protect our countryside.” Adding “This will enable our inner cities not just to benefit from redevelopment but help them give rise to the creativity that flourishes when we invest in making our urban centres work for people. And by concentrating on that regeneration we will safeguard the countryside, that vital escape and sustaining hinterland that our urban centres especially need so much”.  The chair said that, personally, he thought this is very important because, in his view, CPRE needs to project itself as having a positive vision of just how we should house our growing population in affordable homes without ruining our countryside; and we also need to project an image of ourselves of not just being a collection of NIMBYS who are only interested in keeping posh villages just as they are.  The published 2015 report also mentions energy. The fracking proposal at Misson remains very much a live issue. The chair was pleased to see that the County Council raised a number of information points with Island Gas after the initial consultation period had closed and that some of these points chimed with the submissions that CPRE Nottinghamshire had made. We have recently sent in our comments on the further information supplied by Island Gas and the chair gave some details.  The chair said that the branch had made representations to the Chancellor, the Department for Transport and to Mark Spencer MP in support of the proposal to extend the Robin Hood Line from Shirebrook to Ollerton. Mark Spencer MP encouraged us to continue with our efforts and he has been making his own representations, not least at PMQs.  The Chair encouraged members to participate in the forthcoming Eastern England and East Midlands Joint Regional Conference on Wednesday 6 July at The Fleet, Peterborough. This would be a celebration of 90 years of CPRE with Keynote speakers Dame Fiona Reynolds who is Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge and a non-executive director of the BBC and former Director-General of the National Trust until November 2012; and Oliver Hilliam – Senior Communications officer of CPRE and co-author of “22 ideas that saved the English Countryside. There would be lots of opportunities to discuss the work of CPRE (and a free lunch!).  There are many strategic challenges facing CPRE Nottinghamshire. This was brought home vividly to the chair when he recently visited the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading University which holds the CPRE archives, including some old Nottinghamshire documents. These demonstrated the contrast between CPRE in our county now and when operations commenced in 1935 then again after WW2 in 1946. In those early days, the charity was run by members of the aristocracy and the local landed gentry. Volunteers to act as wardens of particular localities were only accepted if they passed a vetting procedure. Today, we are “bottom-up” representatives of the community and desperate for volunteers. Our financial situation is unsustainable in the longer term as we are spending more than our income in order to afford to employ part-time professional assistance. Available sources of funding, such as they are, are for one-off projects rather than ongoing expenses. The alternative is to replace paid assistance (in full or in part) with voluntary efforts and unless we achieve an enormous increase in membership income that must be our goal.  For the future, some assistance from National Office is said to be available by way of guidance on forward planning and campaigning. This is all very well, but we need human resources to undertake plans and campaigns. We need to recruit planners and people willing to help whether expert planners or not.  Rest assured that, while we can, we shall do our very best to protect the countryside in our county. We have been issuing regular newsletters. We hope to sustain the Best Kept Village Competition; continue the Valerie Gillespie Award (with entries invited for the closing date later this year); offering help with neighbourhood planning; and campaigning to protect the green belt. |
| * **Report from Secretary and Policy Advisor**:   The Secretary and Policy Adviser agreed with the chair that we should be a proactive organization which makes or endorses constructive proposals on how to achieve affordable housing while protecting the countryside.  She mentioned two initiatives the branch committee is planning for the second half of 2016 :   * to investigate the proposal to redevelop the former Barton bus depot in Chilwell (Broxtowe) for housing * to organize a ‘county forum’ on affordable housing where we are hoping to bring together LPAs, Housing Associations and others interested in this agenda.   Green Belt :   * She mentioned that a successful meeting was held in Gedling on 20th Jan 2016, with 25 attending. It is intended to follow this up with inter al a response to the Gedling Local Plan Part 2 consultation (deadline is early July) re smaller sites e.g. around Woodborough. * Several major sites have now been deleted from Green Belt in Gedling and being developed e.g. Top Wighay Farm. We should monitor whether developers are doing what they said they would do e.g. on green spaces – and asked whether there were any volunteers. * It is the intention to hold another public Green Belt meeting in Rushcliffe in the autumn.   Planning volunteers and paid staff :  Bettina said that, of course, she had a vested interest in the retention of the paid element as that is her, but it would in any case be really useful to have a network of local people who monitor planning developments in their area especially at an early stage (even rumours can be useful – they can always be investigated).  Fundraising:  1. We offer our services on a consultancy basis to help with planning matters including Neighbourhood Plans – please pass on. In that context, it was worth mentioning that Bettina was now NP trained, and was for example able to answer technical queries at a DCLG-funded NP event in March.  2. Please use new branch membership leaflets – please use these as we retain more of the money than if national ones are used.  Three planning updates on Bettina’s 2015 Report:   1. **Bilsthorpe** energy from waste application (call in) :   We recently received the decision – sadly the Secretary of State agreed with Inspector’s recommendation to grant planning permission – key reasons :   |  |  | | --- | --- | | We argued that: | The inspector recommended that: | | * the site should not be regarded as PDL (former colliery restored to country park with high amenity value) | * treat as PDL | | * the proposal is energy from waste (with waste to be sourced from a wide catchment area) rather than waste recovery and would far exceed what is needed to meet local energy demand | * treat as waster recovery facility (recycling) | | * development would have a major adverse impact on landscape and amenity | * mostly agreed but concluded that the requirement to meet ‘local’ energy demand should carry more weight |  1. **Field Farm** major housing proposal (Broxtowe) :   We had supported local people in calling for   * higher densities, allowing the north eastern corner of the site to remain undeveloped (most sensitive with regard to amenity and biodiversity) * requirement that applicants submit plans for the whole site rather than piecemeal applications   We had also raised concerns with Broxtowe Borough Council (BBC) about the poor, ‘off the peg’ design proposals released by the applicants for public consultation and the unresponsiveness of applicants’ representatives to engage in dialogue with us about ‘place making’.  The applicants submitted an application for part of the site (118 dwellings) – which was refused by BBC on 20th April 2016. BBC did not agree with the two key points local people raised (with our support) but refused the application on grounds of poor design (‘anonymous volume house building’ rather than place making, as the officer report phrased it). And on the failure of the applicants to engage with BBC on place making.   1. **Sookholme solar park application** (Mansfield D) :   We objected to this application due to   * + loss of BMV agricultural land   + adverse impact on landscape and amenity without possibility of mitigation   + conflict with NPPF requirement to protect ‘valued’ landscapes   + fact that applicants had not demonstrated no alternative sites on area would be suitable   We worked with local people, who also funded the cost of my time (4 days) – for which we are grateful.  I am pleased to report that the MDC Planning Committee on 31st May 2016 refused planning permission, agreeing with the officer’s recommendation, which used the arguments we had put forward.  **Peter Winstanley**  Bettina said she had known Peter for some years, first as a colleague when they shared the job of CPRE East Midlands Regional Policy Officer, then as a member of the Nottinghamshire CPRE Executive Committee and volunteer planning adviser. Peter was not only an expert planner, he was also deeply committed to protecting the countryside. He regarded planning as a public service. He was able to analyze local authority and government housing figures, and once called the methods used to arrive at the figures a “dark art”. He could also be funny. An example of his sense of humour is when the then new chair of East Midlands CPRE, Tony Kemmer, was introduced as “very dynamic”, Peter’s reply was “I don’t do dynamic” – which was true only in the sense that his planning interventions were always carefully considered.  Betina said she shares his vision and was honoured to have the opportunity to carry on the work he did so well. |
| * **Statement from Treasurer**   Unfortunately, the Treasurer had been indisposed on her way to the meeting but her report had been kindly brought along beforehand by Elena’s husband. The chair read the elements of the treasurer’s report.  In terms of cash received and paid out during the 2015 calendar year, our financial reserves were £2477 lower at the close of the year than they were at the beginning. Our cash funds at the close of the year were £27,502. However, we had debtors of £3256 and creditors of £2060, bringing our resources up to a figure of £28698 (compared to £32,988 the previous year).  Membership subscriptions and donations were up from £5188 to £7040. Thanks must go to our members for their financial support and to Wilkinsons for the additional financial support they give to the Best Kept Village Competition.  The treasurer expressed her enjoyment of being in post for a second year and her appreciation for the support received from other members of the committee.  Members raised two questions about our finances.   1. Jenny Simms from Radcliffe on Trent Residents’ Association asked why suppliers and miscellaneous had increased substantially. The chair, after an opportunity to look at the accounts, replied that the answer was to some extent down to timing but the main reason was that work done by our policy adviser for a fee charged to those who had commissioned her assistance from outside CPRE had been accounted for by a donation shown as income and then a payment under the heading of a supplier. CPRE Notts had made a small surplus from each of these arrangements. 2. Felicity Crofts asked whether the increase in receipts from members’ subscriptions meant that our memberships had increased in numbers. The chair regretted that the membership was in decline and that the increase was attributable to generosity, for which he was grateful. Ian Biddulph, East Midlands Chair, added that this decline was common across CPRE nationally and was not solely a Nottinghamshire problem   The 2015 Accounts were approved by the meeting. The Chair thanked the treasurer and expressed the hope that she recover from her indisposition as quickly as possible. |
| 1. **Election of President**   Mr Liell Francklin was unanimously re-elected as Branch President. |
| 1. **Election of Chairman**   Fred Cook was unanimously re-elected as chairman. |
| 1. **Election of Treasurer**   Elena Gilbert was unanimously re-elected as treasurer. |
| 1. **Election of Other Members of Management Committee**   Dr Peter Holland was unanimously re-elected to continue to serve on the Executive Committee. |
| 1. **Election of Independent Examiner**   John O’Brien of Community Accounting Plus was unanimously elected. |
| 1. **President’ Closing Remarks**   The President expressed his appreciation of the work being done by CPRE Nottinghamshire. |
| 1. **Any Other Business**   There was none.  The AGM was followed by a very interesting illustrated presentation by Councillor Stephen Walker on the history of the Moor Pond Woods. This was very well received and the Chair expressed his thanks. |