

CPRE Training for Communities

Do you live in a community that could benefit from a training course on planning and campaigning? CPRE West Yorkshire has just secured some funding from our Yorkshire & Humber Regional Group, to develop new training materials that will help communities understand how to use the planning system to better effect in shaping decisions affecting their area. Depending on a community's needs, this could range from basic foundation skills in how planning works, to bespoke assistance with preparing for an appeal. This is a professional service, and we cannot offer it for free, but CPRE will cover half of the total cost of any course we provide. We hope to be ready to start running courses in a couple of months, and we expect to be able to run up to six courses per year, so if this may interest your community please let us know.

CPRE West Yorkshire AGM 25th April

As mentioned earlier, this year's AGM will take place at our Countryside Conversation in Huddersfield on 25th April. Agenda papers will be sent out in due course. If you are interested in becoming a Trustee or taking on a non-Executive role in helping us to run the charity, we would love to hear from you. People with experience in fundraising, communications and volunteer co-ordination would be especially welcome, though if that doesn't sound like you but you're interested in helping, there are plenty of other opportunities too!

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Member Newsletter

Winter 2020



New CPRE West Yorkshire Website

Firstly, a huge thank you to Robert Bamforth and Katy Mugford for getting our new website up and running. West Yorkshire acted as a pilot for a new suite of CPRE websites across our national network. Robert conscientiously steered our involvement in the pilot project, and Katy burned the midnight oil getting all the content together in time for the launch. We are always in need of stories, pictures, campaign news, and information about upcoming events, so please send us anything you'd like to help us keep the website lively. <https://www.cprewestyorkshire.org.uk>



Star Count

Star Count 2020 will be taking place 21-28 February, when the sky is at its darkest. This is a national collaboration between CPRE and the British Astronomical Association. We'll be asking supporters to count the number of stars they can see within the constellation of Orion – a good measure of the level of light pollution where they are. Keen-eyed members will have spotted our feature on West Yorkshire Astronomical Society in the latest issue of Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire, and we're hoping to team up with them to do a Star Count at Winterset Reservoir. Final details of this are yet to be fixed, so if you'd like to know more then please get in touch, and set your sights on our website for updates.

Countryside Conversation

Huddersfield, Saturday 25th April

This major event will be held at the Tolson Museum in Huddersfield – please save the date! We are busily organising it right now. Harnessing the energy we've been generating through the Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire project, we already have several excellent contributors lined up to tell us about their work and interests.

The event will pose the question, *“What would West Yorkshire countryside be like if our ambitions for it could be realised?”* If that sounds Utopian, may be it is: as Oscar Wilde said, *“A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at.”*

We need to have bold and optimistic ideas for the countryside we love if we are to protect it in the long term.

The event will include:

- Speakers, a panel discussion and topical sessions (topics to be confirmed);
- a tour of this fascinating museum;
- free lunch;
- the CPRE West Yorkshire AGM.

Email invitations will go out in a few weeks' time. If you don't have email but are interested in attending, please contact Michael Church and he will pass on your details to the event team.

Planning & Campaigning Round-up

Calderdale Local Plan Examination

The Calderdale Local Plan Examination has been paused but is due to restart imminently. The delay was introduced to enable a consultation on amended housing numbers and their implications. The Inspector determined that Calderdale's employment and housing aspirations did not match up, and gave the Council the option to reduce the employment growth figures, increase the housing numbers, or a combination of the two. The Council opted to increase the housing number, though not by as much as originally suggested. This is unsurprising, because reducing employment aspiration is usually seen as politically damaging. Our position, prepared in close conjunction with Friends of the Earth and some dedicated local volunteers, is that not only are the employment figures unrealistic, but that increasing the housing target will not actually work: it will put further pressure on greenfield land but won't result in people's genuine needs for homes being met.

Related to this are two interesting pieces of national news.



Housing Design Audit

Firstly, CPRE recently commissioned a study by University College London, which is a Housing Design Audit. The report found that one in five of these developments should have been refused planning permission due to poor design that is contrary to National Planning Policy Framework advice. A further 54% shouldn't have been granted planning permission without significant improvements to their design. In other words, 74% of new housing simply isn't good enough. This will come as no surprise to those of working to influence planning applications, or seeing such developments damage their communities, yet it is tragic that the planning system has been so undermined as to enable poor design to flourish. More information is available here:

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/about-us/cpre-media/housing-design-report-2020>

ClientEarth

Secondly, ClientEarth sent letters to 100 local authorities in September 2019, warning that they are considering legal action against them for failing to adequately respond to the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. We have been arguing this point at Local Plan Examinations for some time now. Of those 100 authorities, Bradford and Wakefield are on the list, but not Calderdale - we're not sure why. In any case we will be continuing to campaign for Local Plans that take climate change seriously, and ClientEarth's work can only add to our supporting evidence. Further consultations on the Bradford and Wakefield Plans are expected soon, so it will be interesting to see if climate change is given greater attention. Details of ClientEarth's action are available here:

<https://www.clientearth.org/press/lawyers-put-local-authorities-on-notice-over-climate-inaction/>

Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum

On the subject of legal challenges, Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum (ANDF) has applied for a Judicial Review of the Leeds Site Allocations Plan. At the heart of this case is the way that ‘exceptional circumstances’ for Green Belt change have been determined, which ANDF believe to be erroneous. They have been granted a hearing, scheduled for early February, where the judge will determine if there is a case to be answered by Leeds City Council. You can read more about this case via our website here: <https://www.cprewestyorkshire.org.uk/stories/how-can-local-communities-shape-the-future-of-their-green-belts/>

Leeds-Bradford Airport Link Road

Some potentially good news is the scrapping of plans for a Leeds-Bradford airport link road. This decision was taken just before Christmas in light of a public consultation which showed strong support for a rail halt and parkway station, and with Leeds City Council having recently declared a climate emergency. Nevertheless, passenger growth for the airport, and an employment hub adjacent to the airport with a connecting road to it, are still planned. These remain at odds with the carbon reduction challenge and will still result in loss of countryside in an area that is not well-served by public transport. Read more here: <https://www.cprewestyorkshire.org.uk/news/leeds-bradford-airport-update/>

Queensbury Tunnel

The Queensbury Tunnel debacle continues, with Highways England running up costs to safely abandon the tunnel that are rapidly catching up with the price tag for restoring and re-opening it. The latest news is that the application to permanently block up the tunnel, and eliminate the possibility of it becoming a flagship cycling route, has now received over 6,000 objections, and there are signs that the Department for Transport is beginning to listen. Follow the story on our website here: <https://www.cprewestyorkshire.org.uk/stories/queensbury-tunnel-an-introduction/>

“Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire” project update

We are now half way through our major two-year communications and outreach project. Hopefully most members have seen the quarterly online magazines – we recently published the third issue. You can access them all at <https://www.cprewestyorkshire.org.uk/discover-our-countryside/ways-of-seeing-west-yorkshire/>

Producing the magazine has been a tremendous step forward for us, because it has opened up so many new conversations with different people and groups about the myriad pleasures that West Yorkshire’s countryside offers. Some contributions have been highly technical – for example a lighting engineer explaining the challenges of street lighting design, and a soil scientist examining how different livestock practices impact on soil health. Others have been contemplative – how our landscapes inspire art and music, and give joy and solace. And others have highlighted community and voluntary initiatives that engage people from all walks of life in improving their local environment.

This is exactly what we hoped would happen. Going beyond our expectations, we were also lucky to find a great volunteer from Ilkley who did wonderful work on the design and layout of the third issue – demonstrating that volunteering for CPRE doesn’t just mean tackling planning applications. Speaking of which, we are always open to offers of volunteering, and this could as easily involve taking photographs or writing about walks or local wildlife, as fundraising or campaigning.

Our funding covers four issues of the magazine, and as it has been so well-received we are currently looking at options to keep it going for the rest of this year and beyond. If you’re interested in helping, please get in touch.

