



CPRE Norfolk's Manifesto

By David Hook, Chair, Vision for Norfolk

With a General Election on the horizon CPRE Norfolk has produced a manifesto for the next government outlining policies and actions that will enhance and protect the Norfolk countryside. This will be sent to all candidates in every Norfolk constituency along with a letter asking for their and their party's support on several key issues affecting the countryside.

Our manifesto asks for:

- A reduction in the excessive house building targets that have been imposed throughout Norfolk – this would prevent unnecessary loss of countryside
- The prioritisation of social rented housing provision
- An end to land banking, which can be achieved through a requirement to phase development so that currently allocated sites for housing have to be built out before any new sites can be developed – 161 parish and town councils in Norfolk support us on this
- More development on Brownfield sites, including through the regeneration of cities, e.g. Norwich, by converting redundant office and retail space into residential usage

- Investment in renewable energy schemes that do not threaten the landscape – e.g. rooftop solar, not solar farms and small community owned wind energy developments that do not require large 3 blade turbines to be built on farmers' fields
- An end to plans to transmit electricity from Norwich to Tilbury via a second overhead pylon route – a better alternative would be to use an offshore grid connection
- An end to “planner bashing” and recognition of just how important it is to retain a strong effective planning system which enables local people to play a full part in all decision making
- The reintroduction of regional planning in Britain so that the special features of an area are recognised as important considerations in the plan making process – the relatively few remaining parts of lowland England which are still mainly rural in character, e.g. Norfolk, that act as the “green lungs” of the nation deserve better protection. Not everywhere has to be equally suburbanised - that is not good planning
- All new buildings to be carbon neutral and for substantially greater funding to be made available for schemes to increase the energy efficiency of existing buildings

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Spring Foreward

Protecting the countryside and all its inhabitants has been the key aim of CPRE since 1926, made even more important today with the pressures we are under from population growth and climate change. The impact of what must happen to deal with both puts more pressure on the countryside. The problem comes when short term schemes requiring the least investment (and the greatest financial profit) are hastily cobbled together and thrust upon us. Addressing issues in this way is highly damaging and if long term strategic plans were created and agreed, would lead to far better outcomes for our future.

An example of this is the scheme to double the run of pylons from Norwich, through Suffolk, to Tilbury in Essex. It seems disingenuous to object to any proposals that 'green' our energy grid, and yet our research shows that this new blight on our landscape could simply be avoided, and if we used power locally, such a large scheme may be avoided completely. A similar example is our objection to the proposed dual carriageway road link through a very sensitive part of the Wensum Valley near Norwich. Again, we understand why a new road link was proposed, but believe there are options available that protect the countryside in a far better way, whilst still bringing the benefits of a better link and less traffic rat running through the valley.

The theme of seeking something better for Norfolk, whilst still enabling the changes required, underscores our approach, for instance with our manifesto for Norfolk which we will present to candidates in the forthcoming election. The manifesto forms the background for the above, and why we commissioned reports on the dearth of rural social housing.

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- A green belt for Norwich
- Better protection of Norfolk's tranquil countryside, including rural dark landscapes and dark skies
- Greater financial and practical help to the Environment Agency, local councils and landowners to facilitate the widespread introduction of natural flood management schemes
- An end to plans to build the Norwich Western Link road and for greater investment in public transport solutions
- Policies to promote a prosperous farming industry, which not only produces food, but also improves soil quality and biodiversity, including through the planting of new hedgerows and trees

There are many other challenges from drought to coastal erosion, to sewage dumping and other pollution in our rivers. Flooding too, and that is why we are organising a conference to help communities find solutions for local flooding issues.

You will find out about these in this newsletter.

Ultimately, proper long term planning and investment, and an ethos that cares as much for our environment as money, would have mitigated against all of these.

So, when you have a prospective candidate knock on your door, give them a copy of our manifesto.

Our campaigns mean we need more support from Trustees and Volunteers. If you can give some time to help, please consider doing so, it will be appreciated now and by our future generations and pays back directly to those volunteering.

Please support us to at the Bishop's Garden in Norwich on June 2nd, the countryside day at Mannington Hall on 15th June, and our AGM with annual lecture at Norwich Cathedral on 27th June. I hope to meet some of you at one of those.



Chris Dady
Chair, CPRE Norfolk

We hope that the MPs of the future will understand that our much-loved countryside offers a wide variety of opportunities and attractions which are appreciated by so many people, residents and visitors alike, and that the motivation of CPRE Norfolk, in seeking to conserve these wonderful assets, is not that of a NIMBY.

If you are reading this article you are probably a voter who would support the policies we advocate, so please tell the candidates in your constituency what you think. The more they hear these messages, the greater the chance that the political parties will adopt policies that protect and enhance the countryside.

Norfolk's Affordable Housing Crisis

By Michael Rayner

In January I completed a report which looked at how successful or not Norfolk has been in delivering affordable, in particular social rented, rural housing since the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012.

There are two main ways in which rural affordable housing is provided: firstly, through developers including them in larger developments, almost always as a result of Local Plan policy requirements, and secondly when they are built on 'rural exception sites' on the edges of settlements on land which would not normally be given permission for development. To put it simply, the former are unusual in more rural settlements because large developments are not needed in most villages, although they will be provided in larger villages and towns, so long as developers are not able to reduce the number of affordables due to a lack of 'financial viability'. It is perhaps more surprising that relatively small numbers of rural exception sites have come forward in recent years. This is due to a number of factors including that landowners understandably hold onto land on the edges of settlements in the hope or expectation that they will be allowed to build more profitable market housing at a later date. With the increasing number of Local Plans allowing other forms of housing outside settlement boundaries it is expected that this issue will only become worse.

The main findings of the report show that:

- Local Plans across Norfolk, which are key to allocating sites for, and policies that can encourage or dissuade, the delivery of affordable housing, have not been as effective as necessary regarding affordable provision. A large part of this is due to national policy, which increasingly has encouraged market housing, while making it more difficult and less profitable to deliver much-needed social rented housing.

- National Planning Policy has made it easier for developers to provide more profitable forms of affordable housing, rather than delivering social rented affordable housing, for which there is the most critical need.
- Local Plans have not made the most of the, admittedly few, opportunities provided for by national policy to help deliver as much social rented housing as they could. In particular, the increased number of Local Plan policies potentially permitting market housing and other development on the edges of settlements has discouraged or will discourage the supply of sites for affordable rural housing.
- While Local Plans have tended to have high aspirational targets for affordable housing as demonstrated by the headline percentages in their various (affordable) housing policies for major sites, these have not been met due in large part to national policy allowing developers to cite a lack of economic viability when deciding how many affordables to build, and also by having Local Plan policies which arguably put provision of total numbers of (market) dwellings above the need to provide social rented affordable housing as well as market housing.
- The two main mechanisms by which it is expected that affordable housing will be provided are largely and increasingly not fit for purpose. These are the policy by which rural exception sites outside but adjacent to settlement boundaries should be used for affordables, alongside the aim for major developments (generally of 10 dwellings or more) to provide a percentage of affordables together with market housing.

The recommendations of the report are:

- National Policy should redefine what is meant by 'affordable housing', so that discounted market housing and starter homes are removed from the definition, unless these categories are clearly linked to average local incomes and not just property prices.
- Clear, unambiguous and binding targets should be set for affordable housing, particularly for social rented dwellings.

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Photo - Abigail Oliver

Flood Management Conference

By Katy Jones

CPRE Norfolk has organised a one-day conference on Wednesday May 22nd at Dereham Memorial Hall to give advice and guidance on steps parish councils can take to reduce the risk of flooding in their local area.

Our expert speakers will take delegates through the planning framework, environmental improvement schemes and the role of landowners. We will be showcasing examples of successful flood management measures and identifying other sources of advice and support.

We are also proud to be welcoming Roger Mortlock, CPRE National CEO to this event to give the opening address, with our President Professor Tim O’Riordan providing closing statements.

Chris Dady, CPRE Norfolk Chairman said, ‘This conference is particularly timely as we are seeing significantly more flooding incidents across the county, caused by a combination of climate change and increased pressures on land use and our infrastructure. Not only is flooding costly for those who have been affected, but there is the human impact too; having your home or business flooded is extremely disruptive and distressing.

‘While it can sometimes feel we are powerless against the literally rising tides, there are steps that parish councils and landowners can take to reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding, and we hope this conference inspires and informs people to take action.’



Photo - Chris Gallagher, Unsplash

How to book

Tickets for the conference are FREE for CPRE Norfolk Members with Parish Council CPRE Norfolk Members eligible for two free tickets. For non-members, tickets cost £45 (plus booking fee). All delegates will receive a free Flood Management Toolkit with practical information, advice and guidance for your parish council.

For further details and to reserve your place go to:

www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/get-involved/events

We are delighted that Helen George, Natural Flood Management Coordinator for the Environment Agency, will be among our guest speakers at this conference. Helen has been actively involved in designing local flood management schemes across East Anglia, working in partnership with parish councils and local landowners. She is also the lead author of a new guide for farmers and landowners detailing measures they can take to help reduce flood events. A Natural Flood Management Handbook for East Anglia is available to download via our website.

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Further recommendations of the report on the social housing crisis report:

- Greater (government) support is required to deliver affordable housing on rural exception sites, which would enable small scale affordable housing schemes to be built on the edge of rural settlements. This should include policy changes at national and local level to make it easier for such sites to come forward and to make it harder for other types of development in these locations to take place, in addition to the greater provision of grant funding for rural exception sites.
- Restrictions on the resale of affordable housing stock across rural parishes should be extended and enforced, so that these properties continue to be occupied by local residents, and not as second or holiday homes.

It’s hoped that national and local policy will be strengthened to make the delivery of truly affordable housing a priority, so that local people can live in settlements where they have family and perhaps work, as well as reducing housing waiting lists.

To read the full report visit -

www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/resources/affordable-housing-in-norfolk-a-report/

CPRE Norfolk AGM & annual lecture 2024

Join us on Thursday 27th June in the Weston Room at Norwich Cathedral for the CPRE Norfolk 2024 AGM and annual lecture.

This year our annual lecture will be given by our retiring President, Professor Tim O’Riordan OBE. Tim is an Emeritus Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia. He received an OBE in 2010, is a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Norfolk, served as Sheriff of Norwich (2009-10), and is a Fellow of the British Academy. Tim holds an MA in Geography from the University of Edinburgh, an MS in Water Resources Engineering from Cornell University, and a PhD in Geography from the University of Cambridge.

Professor Tim O’Riordan is one of the founders in the field of sustainability science and has served as President of CPRE Norfolk since May 2000. He will be very sadly missed when he steps down from this role in July this year.

Following our short AGM, Tim will give a talk ‘[Reflecting on the Successful Role of CPRE Norfolk](#)’ during his time as president and sharing his insights on the future of our rural landscape.

The AGM & lecture is always a great opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and learn more about the work we do, so don’t miss out on what is sure to be an informative and engaging event.



Retiring CPRE Norfolk President, Professor Tim O’Riordan

Doors will be open from 6pm with the AGM starting at 6.30pm, followed by Professor O’Riordan’s talk. There will be time for questions after the talk and the event is anticipated to finish by 7.30pm.

Refreshments will be available and the site is wheelchair accessible.

Book your place now

To help us ensure the event is as well prepared as possible we ask that you secure your tickets in advance.

Please book your tickets by visiting -

www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/get-involved/events

Please contact info@cprenorfolk.org.uk if you have any questions.



Photo - Small Axe

Open Garden Day

The Bishop of Norwich has kindly invited CPRE Norfolk to host an open day of his beautiful gardens on Sunday, 2nd June and entry will be free for members.



The Bishop's House Gardens, Norwich

The historic gardens are part of the private residence of the Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher who has strong ecological interests as the lead Bishop for the Environment in the Church of England.

The organically run garden, which is more than 4 acres in size, features long herbaceous borders, woodland and jungle' walks, a large perennial wildflower labyrinth and fruit orchard. The blossoms in the orchard are amongst some of the many flowers foraged by the Bishop's bees. The extensive shrubberies contain many rare and unusual plants, among these being a Hebe planted from a sprig taken from Queen Victoria's wedding bouquet in 1840. There is also a kitchen garden, a bamboo walk and a popular plant sales area all within the 600 year old flint boundary walls.

CPRE Norfolk volunteers and trustees will be hosting some informative and enlightening stands and talks throughout the afternoon on a variety of topics. There may be some musical interludes as well as stalls, activities and refreshments with seating in the gardens available.

The gardens will be open from 1pm - 4.30pm with the last admittance at 4.00pm.

Admission is FREE for members of CPRE Norfolk on production of your membership card and just £5 for adult non-members. Accompanied children under 16 years and wheelchair users are also free.

Assistance Dogs only.

To learn more and to book tickets please visit -

www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/get-involved/events

We need your help!

In order to make the Bishop's House garden open day a huge success we will need the help of our members - not only in attending on 2nd June, but in helping out and volunteering on the day.

If you enjoy meeting the public and are able to offer us a few hours of your time, we'd really love to hear from you!

Please either email info@cprenorfolk.org.uk or call us on 01603 761660.



Wild About Mannington

The Mannington Estate is one of Norfolk's hidden gems. Its magnificent, moated hall, built around 1460, and extensive grounds are open from May to September, with a two for one entry for CPRE members on presentation of a membership card, (excluding charity and special event days).

Mannington was one of the first places in the country to introduce a countryside management scheme, with public access and interpretation. A wide variety of habitats may be accessed by following the trails that take you into ancient and coppice woodland, wet wildflower meadows, unimproved grassland, and green lanes and reveal many historic buildings. There is also an arboretum of native trees only a short walk from the visitor centre.

A boardwalk gives access to a 4.3 hectare wet wildflower meadow rich in wildlife. Hunting barn owls, harvest mice, 75 species of plants and abundant butterflies are just some of the things to be seen. An observation hide with wheelchair access looks across a tranquil stretch of water where edible frogs, kingfishers, and otters may be seen.

The gardens around the medieval moated manor feature a wide variety of plants, trees and shrubs in different settings. Throughout the gardens are many roses, especially classic varieties. In the Heritage and Modern Rose Gardens are roses in designs reflecting their date



Mannington Hall, Norfolk

and origin. On the South Lawn is a classic temple and the Sensory Garden with water feature and plants selected for touch, sound and taste, scent and colour.

Found in the grounds are ruins of a chapel, and thanks to the generosity of Lady Walpole, the Chapel Gardens have eleven trees planted in memory of notable past supporters, volunteers and trustees of CPRE Norfolk.

Over the years many 'Countryside Days' have been held and this is being reintroduced with 'Wild About Mannington' on Saturday June 15th. CPRE Norfolk will be helping to celebrate wildlife in Norfolk by attending this event, which will be combined with a bioblitz of the estate.

The Mannington Hall website gives full details of all events, opening times for the gardens and cafe, how to visit the hall itself, and directions - <https://manningtongardens.co.uk/>

Did you know ?

Your CPRE Norfolk membership card also gets you discounts at the following venues in Norfolk:

- Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum
- Plantation Garden
- Raveningham Gardens
- Stody Lodge Gardens
- Wells and Walsingham Light Railway

For the complete list of CPRE membership offers visit - <https://www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/resources/cpre-members-guide/>



Photo - Abigail Oliver

People

Sandra Walmsley

We would like to thank Sandra Walmsley for her time and service as Vice-Chair of CPRE Norfolk. Sandra joined us in 2021 and led a number of projects, including work on hedgerow rejuvenation in Norfolk as well as securing funding for the rewilding of Marham Village Pre School's garden to create a wildlife haven and learning space. Sandra's knowledge and enthusiasm will be missed.

Anita Diaper

CPRE Norfolk would also like to give thanks to Anita Diaper who served as administrator for the CPRE West Norfolk branch. Anita was instrumental in setting up the popular wild herb foraging workshop in Stoke Ferry Common and could be seen manning the CPRE Norfolk stall at a number of our events. We wish her well in all her future endeavours.

Volunteering Vacancies

We have a number of really interesting trustee and volunteering opportunities open at CPRE Norfolk currently.

We are seeking:

- A Chair of Trustees
- An Honourable Secretary
- A Membership & Events Lead
- Trustees
- Volunteers

All of these roles are flexible in the experience required and time to be committed. In return for your time, CPRE Norfolk can offer you training, support and the opportunity to learn new skills all whilst championing important environmental issues.

If you are interested in and care about the Norfolk countryside, please consider becoming a trustee or volunteering with CPRE Norfolk.

To learn more visit -
www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering



Photo - Abigail Oliver

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