

CPRE Sussex
Minutes of the 40th Annual General Meeting
held at
Meridian Hall, East Court, East Grinstead
on Wednesday, 10th July 2013 at 10.30am

1. The President, Lord Egremont, welcomed the members and guests to the meeting.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from: Liz Beeney, Martin Beaton, Mr & Mrs Blurton, Mr R. Cheesman, Stuart Derwent, Bill Freeman, Roy Haycock, Anita and Celia Hewerdine, Penny Hudd, John Hurwood, Chris Lewis, Stuart Meier, Henry Smith, MP Crawley, Bernice Ryan, Sir Frederick and Lady Sowrey.

3. **Minutes of the 39th Annual General Meeting**

Approval of the Minutes of the 39th Annual General Meeting held at Brinsbury Campus, North Heath, Pulborough on Tuesday, 10th July 2012 were proposed by Michael Brown and seconded by Peter Lansberry. All approved and signed by Lord Egremont.

4. **Matters Arising From the Minutes**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Chairman's Report**

Rodney Chambers thanked Lord Egremont and welcomed all to the meeting with a special welcome to old friends and particularly Christine Drury, Chair of CPRE South East Region and new member of the CPRE National Board.

RC commented that requests to speak under Any Other Business would be time limited to allow the main speaker ample time at the end of formal business.

RC explained that the Chairman's Report in the Summer Review covered the calendar year but much had happened since 1st January as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into full force.

The Branch had supported Parish Councils in formulating their Neighbourhood Plans through a series of Neighbourhood Planning events.

In addition, the Branch held a hugely successful Spring Conference - "Futureproofing" - highlighting the dangers and problems faced in Sussex and gave

thanks to Nick Herbert, MP for Adur and Worthing, supporter of the countryside, and keynote speaker on the day.

Following the conference, a letter was sent to all Sussex MPs outlining the issues of concern. RC explained that under NPPF, if a viable local plan and assessment of local housing need was not in place, there would be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In Sussex only one local authority has a plan in place - Wealden District Council - leaving the rest of Sussex vulnerable to speculative applications from developers.

Sussex Branch will also be represented at a National Office Westminster Debate with MPs on 16th July.

The Branch has considered how best to address the threats and protect the countryside through the use of new technology such as the website, a blog, Twitter and Facebook. Indeed the use of the internet and email is becoming more important in light of the high cost of postage. Volunteers with media experience have made an invaluable contribution and RC expressed thanks to Jessica Mayall, Volunteer Press Officer, for her hard work in securing press coverage.

RC commented that CPRE Sussex “punches well above its weight” but strength in Districts varies. He remarked that we are always looking for volunteers and trustees and urgently need a new Chair and Treasurer, although he and Peter Lansberry will stay in post until the end of September. Peter has moved to the Lake District and others are stepping down. Roger Smith, Vice Chair of West Sussex, reaches the end of his allowed time span under the current constitution but remains a “doughty champion” for Horsham & Crawley District. We are saying goodbye to Stuart Derwent, Vice Chair for East Sussex, as he devotes more time to his charity work in Brighton and to Edmund Critchley who is resigning for family reasons. Chris Lewis has moved to Somerset and is now Chair of CPRE Somerset. RC expressed the Branch’s sincere thanks and wished all well.

RC thanked all for attending and supporting the Branch. He thanked the Trustees as colleagues and “critical friends”, staff and volunteers.

Lord Egremont expressed huge thanks to RC for his years of “magnificent work” for which we are very grateful.

6. Director’s Report

Georgia Wrighton (GW) acknowledged the achievements of the Branch including: the Neighbourhood Planning events, the “Futureproofing” Conference, development of website and media presence to “get the word out”, lobbying of MPs on NPPF’s failure to protect the countryside and attendance at National Office’s Westminster debate the following week. She noted that local Sussex groups will also be attending.

GW referred to Branch support of the Bexhill Campaign, its cost in terms of harm to the countryside and the £30 million pound additional building cost. The Branch is also supporting the Gatwick Area Conservation Committee Conference in October

and keeping a watchful eye on fracking, for example in Balcombe, with particular concerns regarding water and soil contamination and the ability of agencies to regulate and police the fracking operations.

GW commented that work on the Branch internal strategy had been a “roller coaster ride” with the focus of building people power in the Districts and getting the word out about our activities. With this in mind, two groups had been established - the Protect Sussex Group responsible for planning campaigns and the Countryside Action Team, responsible for countryside projects, diversifying and expanding membership and volunteers.

GW applauded the work of our new media volunteers including Alex Barbuti, winner of the CPRE Sussex Journalism Award and developer of the blog “The Conflicted Environmentalist”. GW also attended the City Achiever’s Event in Brighton receiving the Student Journalism Award on behalf of Tom Copeland. We look forward to Tom and Alex working together. GW further expressed thanks to Jessica Mayall, a stalwart media volunteer, for her work on Facebook and Twitter.

GW and Penny Hudd are also in discussion with Brinsbury and Plumpton Agricultural Colleges with a view to developing a project on sustainable farming. GW noted that Plumpton College have offered a vineyard tour.

GW drew the meetings attention to the Threats Map and asked members to contribute their knowledge of threats and to correct any errors. The map will become interactive on the website.

GW ended with a request for member email addresses and expressed her excitement at working with the new groups in the year ahead.

7) Questions & Answers Following the Chairman’s and Director’s Report

David Roberts noted the 2010 optimism about the countryside and the “now” contrasting criticism of the government and asked what has happened. RC responded that housing was regarded by government as a tool for economic development but CPRE are firmly against development on greenfield sites. The introduction of major infrastructure legislation would also enable the pushing through of major developments such as HS2 and wind farms in the name of economic development.

John Kay reported that at a recent meeting Nick Boles had been unusually honest about the conflict between localism and NPPF. Localism changes will be important but the government is desperate for economic growth. The housing industry is pushing for profitable greenfield development and the government will support applications where there are no neighbourhood plans in place. But local plans will take precedent and CPRE are key to getting local plans right.

GW commented that although the South East Plan had been abolished, the same figures are being used. Districts need to devise their own housing level.

Roger Smith added that CPRE National Office need to support the MPs, including Nick Herbert, Nicholas Soames and Francis Maude, in their opposition to government planning policy.

John Harmer asked “what can we do to make sure brownfield sites are prioritised?” GW reported that we are pushing this at National Office and have concerns regarding “land banking” by developers since this land is not counted when assessing housing needs.

8) Resolution to Adopt the Annual Report, Accounts and Charity Commissions Return for the year to 31st December 2012.

Peter Lansberry (PL) confirmed that the Accounts had been circulated in the Review. He commented that we are sustainable but there is pressure on expenditure and income is “fickle”. Subscriptions are holding, appeals and legacies are variable. With an income of £56,000, £10,000 HS2, and £76,000 expended, we are £20,000 short. This imbalance can be sustained for a number of years and is looked at carefully in the budget process.

Desmond Gunner asked if the Charity Commission commented on the size of CPRE Sussex’s reserves. PL replied that Trustees take this into account and there was a plan in place to reduce the reserves over a period of 5 years but we had been fortunate and received more income than expected. However, since planning and conservation are long term matters, we are cautious about spending money faster on individual campaigns. An appropriate and up-to-date plan satisfies the Charity Commission. Desmond Gunner commented that CPRE Sussex should spend if the need arises.

RC added that the cost of fighting appeals can escalate alarmingly, for example the cost of the Almodington Association’s appeal against the Almodington Glasshouse Development reached £180,000 and we spent £16,000 on the Polegate Appeal two years ago. We will, therefore, maintain a conservative attitude.

PL noted that a Population Housing Need Report in one District had been financed at a cost of £6,000 and we are ready to do so again if the need arises. With reserves we can react.

Lord Egremont thanked PL for his work.

The Report and the Annual Accounts were adopted by the meeting having been proposed by Desmond Gunner and seconded by Michael Brown.

9) Election of Officers and Trustees

The re-election on-block of the Trustees: Rodney Chambers, Michael Brown, Justin French-Brooks, John Kay, Peter Lansberry, Penny Hudd and Stephen Hardy was proposed by Peter Lansberry and seconded by Edmund Critchley. Their re-election was approved by the meeting without dissent.

Peter Lansberry and Rodney Chambers will take caretaker roles until successors are appointed. Rodney Chambers was re-elected as Chairman, proposed by Michael Brown and seconded by Stephen Hardy. Peter Lansberry was re-elected as Treasurer, proposed by Michael Brown and seconded by Justin French-Brooks.

Two new Trustees, Ann Reynolds and David Johnson, have come forward but there was insufficient time for notice to be given to elect them at the AGM. Therefore, approval was sought and given by the whole meeting to co-opt Ann Reynolds and David Johnson.

The following Trustees resigned at the AGM: Christopher Lewis, Stuart Derwent and Edmund Critchley. Roger Smith stepped down having reached the end of his term of office under the current constitution.

10) Resolution

The resolution set out in the notice of the meeting to approve the establishment of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) called “Campaign to Protect Rural England - Sussex Branch” was commended to the meeting by RC. The resolution was passed unanimously on a show of hands.

11) Any Other Business

Lawrence Keeley (LK) described his concerns regarding Wealden District Council’s intention to build 10,000 new homes on Wealden. LK’s proposal protects open space, saves farmland, creates affordable homes, encourages job share, allows for proper care and pensions. Copies of LK’s proposal were available at the meeting and will be posted on the website.

Desmond Gunner (DG) presented his proposal to make development of greenfield sites less profitable. The proposal will be placed on CPRE Sussex website. DG asked that members take a look and printed copies were available at the meeting. The proposal, by limiting the housing density to 20 dph compared with the current normal 30 dpm, aims to limit the damage of development on greenfield sites, improve regulations, and ensure each plot has sufficient land, half un-surfaced, to alleviate flooding, to help wildlife and encourage tree planting to screen houses. In this way developers will not be able to build as many houses on greenfield sites as brownfield, reducing their comparatively greater profitability.

Gerald Summerfield (GS) asked about protecting the coast, for example wind turbines. GW reported that we are more supportive of off-shore and support renewable energy. Regarding Rampion Wind Farm, we have sought improvements to ensure on-shore development is appropriate. GS confirmed that he was supporting locally the Lewes to Uckfield rail line.

David Roberts (DR) expressed shock at CPRE Sussex’s resistance to HS2 and outlined the benefits. RC proposed meetings in East and West Sussex specifically for members to bring their issues and concerns.

RC presented Alex Barbuti (AB) with the CPRE Journalism Award with thanks for her hard work. AB, newly qualified journalist, expressed her thanks for the support received from RC, GW and Penny Hudd.

RC expressed farewell wishes and thanks to Liz Beeney, Administrator with 17 years of dedicated service.

He presented flowers and wine to Lesley Wilson and Sas Drury and thanked them for their hard work in the office.

RC presented flowers and wine to Lorna Train and thanked her for her long service as a dependable volunteer, particularly for her series of visits. Lorna commented that the year's events had all been over-subscribed, running double tours on several occasions. Lorna is working on and looking forward to the next year's programme.

RC expressed his thanks to GW commenting that she had made a tremendous difference bringing huge energy and political savvy to the Branch. GW responded that it had been a pleasure working with RC.

Following a short break, Duncan Baker-Brown, Director of BBM Sustainable Design gave a fascinating presentation "Cool, Green and Cheap: Working in Harmony with the Landscape".

Signed Date