

REVIEW

SPRING/SUMMER 2014

We're all stewards now: the Sussex Countryside Charter
Fracking at Fernhurst: Lord Cowdray gives his views
What 'localism' really looks like

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We exist to promote the beauty,
tranquility and diversity of our
countryside by encouraging the
sustainable use of land and natural
resources in town and country.

The opinions expressed in the
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A new sense of stewardship

2014!

got off to a dramatic start with destructive flooding hitting communities and individuals hard. The response has been amazing, despite the destruction and disruption, people have pulled together.

This is a wake up call for us all. To look after our countryside and towns in Sussex, we must find a new and smarter way.

If we are to deliver the economic and housing development we need without further damage, we must develop new attitudes to the land.

We have to take personal responsibility for the health of natural systems that are essential to our lives – new sense of stewardship.*

'Smart growth' provides a model. Forward-thinking development that won't put the environment under such strain that it can no longer absorb the demands we place on it. It means moving away from development that puts us, and all life, in danger.

Flooding, impacts of a more chaotic climate and the prospect of poisoned landscapes are avoidable if we use our heads.

Government cuts to funds supporting farmers looking after our wildlife and biodiversity put the natural environment under unnecessary risk.

The countryside is there for us all. It is an integral part of who we all are. It's the air we breath, provides food we eat, inspires us, or is there simply to enjoy.

Most of us have experienced the pleasure of growing things, even in pots. Every day small and large green spaces in town provide a link to the open spaces of the countryside, there for us all, so long as we respect it.

Smart growth is the way forward, not regressive steps into a world of short termism characterised by

current national planning thinking. Money created by desecrating our natural environment is an empty gain indeed. Who will we blame when the damage is done, the party over?

When we think of 'development', we can think of a negative, destructive force. It should not be – it should be positive, a holistic vision, embracing the creation of resilient environments, high quality design and strong aesthetic.

Not sprawling developments on 'easy win' green-field sites undistinguishable and anonymous. Genuinely affordable housing backed by communities, wins hearts and minds not sprawling 'clone' developments with pared down, mean spirited 'affordable' housing, a signal failure to invest our futures.

Whether it's development for housing, energy or transport we must consider our innate connection to the land in everything we do. Our future way of life depends on it.

We must do things differently, enthusiastically setting our minds to innovation, design and development-for-good.

We face many looming threats in Sussex – the task is to find a balance that speaks for future generations. A second runway at Gatwick, fracking, new roads and development could be disastrous if we do not 'do things right'.

Please join us in developing a 'new sense of stewardship' – however you can.

David Johnson



*See page 4

We're all stewards now

Georgia Wrighton outlines the results of our December survey – towards a 'Sussex Countryside Charter'.

There was a massive response to our December survey – it clearly struck a chord with members and the wider public. We'd like to thank all those who responded and now invite your thoughts on the values and commitments you've highlighted to inform our developing Sussex Countryside Charter.

We want to send a strong message to people who have an influence on our futures and to strengthen partnerships, working together to protect and enrich the countryside.

Do let us know what you think – please go to: bit.ly/sussexcpres or email us at info@cpresussex.org.uk

PROGRESS FOR SUSSEX

'Smart-growth' - forward-thinking development that ensures the environment is resilient and able to absorb the demands we place on it is the way forward to make meaningful progress.

Our philosophy looks to enhance and protect valued countryside, unlock brownfield land and link sustainable transport with the regeneration of towns and villages as healthy, distinctive, vibrant places to live and work.

Key commitment:

We believe in a holistic vision for town and country, ensuring our environment is resilient, liberating brownfield sites for regeneration, promoting high quality design, excellent environmental standards and maintaining a unique sense of place.

91% agreed that –

"Previously developed brownfield sites should be re-used first, in preference to building on green-fields."

You said:

"I would also suggest that when a property developer has a land bank of brownfield land, he should be compelled by law to develop such sites before applications for green-field land can even be put on the table."

Planning Fact:

The new National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) promotes brownfield sites before green-field but more must be done to unlock brownfield for development

We welcome the NPPG statement that Councils should apply strict national flood risk tests, refusing development if not met.

Ideally in practice, authorities will be enabled to work with, not against, nature.

COUNTRYSIDE FOR EVERYONE

Genuinely affordable housing is a priority; backed by communities, provided by Community Land Trusts, local co-operatives and housing associations. Sprawling 'clone' developments with squeezed down affordable housing are a serious failure to invest in our future.

Truly affordable housing integrated and in character with settlements is the way forward.

Key commitment:

We believe that in rural areas genuinely affordable housing by local providers, in tune with the character of villages and towns, should be prioritised over sprawling market housing developments in the countryside.

79% agreed that –

"Support for affordable housing delivered by local providers should be prioritised over new market housing in rural Sussex."

You said:

"I can't see my daughter being able to afford a house in our village and she may want to remain in here when she is older. Therefore a few small affordable homes could be sensitively developed."

Planning Facts:

Under the NPPG authorities must allocate more sites if housing becomes less affordable in an area.

However, we fear unless Government and Planning Inspectors have real understanding of local area needs this will lead to even more expensive market housing building on the edges of villages.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The countryside is there for us all, prized for its massive environmental, social and economic importance.

Local people know and love their areas, visitors become attached to special places and think long term, well beyond the short-termism characterised by the current 'business as usual' approach.

We all have a responsibility to look after our countryside and to use our voices as active citizens to protect it for now and in the future.

Key commitment:

Local people think for the longer term and should have a strong voice, for futureproofed decision making which meets positive development needs, in the right place, with excellent design and environmental standards.

90% agreed that:

"Local people should be given a strong voice to ensure that development needs are met in the right place, sensitively located, with excellent environmental standards and high quality design."

You said:

"Whilst agreeing with a 'bottom up' approach to planning, the debate at a local level is still, largely at a 'nimby' level."

Planning Fact:

Too many Ministerial decisions favour developers rather than local communities when recognising constraints for development.

However, welcome words in the new NPPG allow local authorities to set more realistic house building targets based on local constraints, but it will allow barn conversions without planning permission.

Setting no criteria on affordability or sustainability of location could be damaging. The loss of agricultural buildings for food production is also a concern. We welcome that conversions in National Parks and AONBs will not be allowed.

NEW SENSE OF STEWARDSHIP

The countryside is there for us all, so long as we protect and cherish it for our own and future generations.

We must look to a new sense of stewardship, working smarter to deliver our needs while respecting the land vital for our health and wellbeing.

Key commitment:

Environmental Stewardship schemes to support farmers to nurture biodiversity and protect the environment should be strengthened and enhanced.

87% agreed that:

"EU Environmental Stewardship schemes to support farmers to nurture biodiversity and protect the environment should be continued and enhanced."

You said:

"It is vital that we support farmers to help nature flourish on their farms. We have already missed our target to halt biodiversity loss, so it's essential we help farmers be wildlife-friendly."

Planning Fact

The government have cut farming stewardship funding in favour of production, a backward step.

We aim to complete the Charter by May 2014. Do let us know what you think – please go to bit.ly/sussexcpres or email us at info@cpresussex.org.uk

Squeezing nature into reserves

Biodiversity should be everywhere, in every field, every development and every nook and cranny, says Andy Boddington .

Two upcoming policies look set to concentrate England's wildlife into nature reserves. It seems certain that the government will shortly adopt biodiversity offsetting. Developers will be given free range to bulldoze longstanding wildlife sites if they need them for housing, factories and roads, providing they finance an 'offset' biodiversity scheme elsewhere. New nature reserves are set to be assembled like flat-pack furniture in the belief that centuries-old lichen, gnarled wood and unique cocktails of bugs and beasts can be replaced almost overnight.

The Common Agricultural Policy is about to change too. After much debate, 12% of CAP funds are being put aside for rural schemes; £3.5 billion a year. Of this, £400 million will be directed towards the rural economy and farm competitiveness.

The remaining £3.1 billion will go into new environmental schemes. All farmers will have to implement a number of green measures to receive their basic payment from Defra, including maintenance of hedgerows, soil quality and drainage. Depending

on the size of the holding, farmers will have to plant more than one crop. They will need to ensure that at least 5% of land is pasture and establish 5% of the holding as an 'ecological focus area'. Farming leaders are already saying they will resist a rule that insists that farms larger than 30 hectares plant at least three crops, even if it means they get less EU money.

Over the next two years, funding for more than 1,200 stewardship schemes and eight environmentally sensitive areas in Sussex will come to an end. They will be replaced by a new Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS). This will be a big challenge for county farmers, many of whom have worked hard to improve the environment on their farms in recent years.

Just like biodiversity offsetting, NELMS will target money on promoting biodiversity in selected sites and areas. It is expected that the area of farmed land under agri-environment schemes across England will halve from 70% to 35-40% over the next several years.

It's good news that there is still money for environmentally friendly farming. It can't be bad

'New nature reserves are set to be assembled like flat-pack furniture in the belief that centuries-old lichen, gnarled wood and unique cocktails of bugs and beasts can be replaced almost overnight.'

that developers will be forced to compensate for the damage to the environment they cause. But the new schemes could lead to a landscape where nature is corralled into reserves and corridors sandwiched between sprawling developments and barren farms. That can't be good.



Action on floods

Stuart Derwent believes we need to go back to the basics of water management.

Many have experienced severe flooding this winter, bringing unbelievable disruption. This is due, we are told, to a wet winter with rainfall levels beating all previous records or some such statistic. But this is a problem that should have been anticipated.

The last time I wrote about water for the *Review* was almost exactly two years ago. Interestingly, it covered the dire drought we appeared to be facing at the time following two dry winters. The following comment was therefore edited out:

'With the odd weather of recent years, I would not be surprised if we are concerned about flooding before too long – remember the summer of 2007?'

But the article was not published until the Winter issue by which time we had had months of wet summer making the comment again relevant. It shows how quickly things can change and how we need to be prepared to manage water better whether in drought or flood.

On 27 December, *The Telegraph* published this letter from me: 'Your

"This is a problem that should have been anticipated."

Editorial "We must do more to protect against flooding", calls for a renewed focus on prevention, and this makes total sense. The more extreme weather events arising from the effects of climate change are no doubt a factor, but have we also forgotten the basics?

'For decades we have filled in ponds, filled or culverted watercourses, not maintained rivers and ditches, changed agricultural practices and then wonder why areas known by our ancestors to be flood plains are inundated.

'Once we wake up to the idea that our land drainage system is defunct, we might be able to move forward.'

This was referring to flooding occurring at the time – before the continuing rain in January and February.

I remain convinced that we have forgotten the basics as a community – not just the Environment Agency, the planners or the farmers – but all of us.

People are talking increasingly about the lack of dredging in the Somerset Levels and I tend to agree, but we must think about this as a community and not just pass the peak flows to others downstream.

Let us hope that the new Lead Local Flood Authorities being created have the expertise to pull it all together. We need carefully considered plans to protect our homes, businesses and countryside.

For decades we have filled in ponds, filled or culverted watercourses, not maintained rivers and ditches, changed agricultural practices and then wonder why areas known by our ancestors to be flood plains are inundated.

Paying lip service to localism

Councillor Phélim Mac Cafferty, Chair of Planning at Brighton & Hove City Council summarises the state of play...

The government Inspector gave us her verdict on our Brighton & Hove City Plan in December. Following the direction of travel with the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), she asked the council to look again in 'under every stone' for many more sites for housing, despite our argument.

Our focus throughout the Examination in Public was to:

- Achieve a balance between providing desperately needed new local homes and retaining the right amount of space for jobs.
- Push strong standards of sustainability in local building, with policies that anticipate our respect for our planet and its finite resources.
- Protect our local open spaces from inappropriate development and our rich heritage of buildings.

On the urban fringe, we provided robust studies for its protection. After much soul-searching, we included Toad's Hole Valley in the plan as a tract of privately owned land without any formal protection to comply with government guidance.

Otherwise, scheduled monuments, statutorily-protected spaces such as allotments, sites of scientific interest and the downland setting mean there is no substantial volume of land available.

Furthermore, as we had calculated that 94% of new homes could be provided on brownfield sites, concreting over precious urban fringe land would jeopardise access to the countryside for City residents and challenge our ambition to become the gateway to the National Park.

Yet despite all of our best efforts, our local urban fringe could be sacrificed. The abandonment of regional planning by the Coalition Government with a 'duty to cooperate' has complicated our work while the adoption of the risible NPPF, along with the market-driven deregulation of the planning system will result in permanent damage to open space and the built environment.

Such a blinkered approach is myopic at best and, quite frankly, criminal at worst. It will impair our vision to achieve the maximum environmental outcomes. Further, in a city with strong eco-building

practices, this is possibly the worst message to a local fledgling movement. Such an approach also paralyses our efforts to attain crucial social justice outcomes at key sites as we build a better Brighton and Hove.

A few weeks ago Nick Boles MP, in a letter to the Planning Inspectorate, wrote: '...local authorities, and the communities who elect them, are in charge of planning for their own areas.' Which sounds about right.

The angry conclusion I came to is that what Boles really means is that councils, as the assumed apostles of unsustainable development espoused in the NPPF, must genuflect in front of deepened government centralisation.

So this is what 'localism' really looks like...

Councillor Phélim Mac Cafferty is also the Green Party Councillor for Brunswick and Adelaide.

STOP THE FRACKING TRAFFIC



Viscount Cowdray fights fracking plans

Although plans for fracking in Balcombe have currently been scrapped, another area of Sussex is now under threat. Anne Reynolds reports.

Last year, an application to test drill for shale gas at Nine Acre Copse outside the village of Fernhurst was submitted by Celtique Energie. Not only is the site within the South Downs National Park but one of the local landowners beneath whose land the fracking would take place is Viscount Cowdray – and he is opposing the plans.

In early January a small group from the CPRE National Park committee went to meet the campaign group frackfreefernurst at the site. After talks with CPRE's hydrologist, Graham Warren, they submitted a five-page letter objecting to the application. CPRE Sussex director, Georgia Wrighton met up with Lord Cowdray in February and he revealed that he had been approached 18 months ago to allow test drilling on his land. 'I said no then, and the more I have studied this process, the more I see it as unnecessary in this country. This is a non-renewable, finite energy source, it is all about short-term revenue

for the Exchequer. Another major concern is the lack of regulation,' said Lord Cowdray. 'Does the government have the ability to monitor these sites?

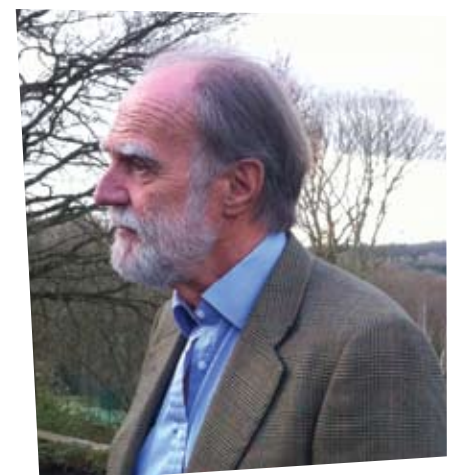
Where will the waste go? The fracking fluids, toxic chemicals, have to be stored on this site in containers that will be sunk into pits. Who is to say that these won't leak into the land and groundwater resources? Nothing that Celtique has said reassures me that they can police this, and there is no obligation on the operating company to have insurance against contamination.'

Lord Cowdray also pointed out that the access to the site along narrow country lanes is totally unsuitable for the likely volume of traffic required by the operating company. 'If this goes ahead it will result in the industrialisation of this remote area and could change our way of life forever.'

Under current legislation, shale gas prospectors need permission from landowners before drilling under their properties. Lord

Cowdray explained that he and five other West Sussex landowners had mounted the first direct legal challenge to the government warning that they will not consent to drilling beneath their land and if Celtique Energie takes legal proceedings to gain access, it will be strongly resisted in the courts.

Lord Cowdray says he believes that the country should invest in renewable forms of energy. 'I recognise that we have to make compromises but not in non-renewable energy sources and at the expense of the countryside, particularly in a national park.'



Round the districts

In future issues we plan to look at the work and experience of our local groups. Here, John Kay and Mary Greenwood talk to Jessica Mayall about the Lewes Group.

The Lewes district is a shining example of how effective a CPRE Sussex district can be. It is no surprise that key to this thriving group are its members. Lewes has a number of very active volunteers who drive campaigns and events, inviting everyone in the district to enjoy talks and activities, learn more about the countryside and defend their patch of Sussex.

John Kay explains that for Lewes ‘the key thing is to set out to provide at least a couple of events a year for members to enjoy’. There is usually a well-publicised summer outing and an autumn event for Lewes’s 150-plus members. Normally there is no charge or need to book. As John says, ‘it’s “turn up if you like” and when the weather is good many do!’

The summer event offers an ideal opportunity to learn more about what’s going on in the countryside. Last year’s visit was to Court Garden Farm, Ditchling. Worked at Higher Level National

Stewardship Scheme standard, the farm has diversified to include a vineyard that produces award-winning sparkling wines. John recalls that after a walk through fields to the vineyard, ‘as luck would have it, haymaking was in full swing as we strolled back to their barn for tea and excellent homemade cakes’.

The autumn event features a speaker and the AGM. Last year, Ian Everest showed a wonderful film on ‘the farming year’. It was made in the 1950s on a Bishopstone farm where Ian’s father had worked. Ian himself could be seen as a child among horse-drawn contraptions and hardworking, head-scarfed women planting potatoes. An accolade to, to the farmer’s son, who had been given the cine camera “to keep him occupied and out of trouble.”

To keep everything ticking over, a core group of about ten active

“It’s ‘turn up if you like’ and when the weather is good many do!”

members meet every couple of months, often generously hosted at Liz Mannington’s home, to discuss upcoming issues and events. John says: ‘I look forward to those Tuesday evenings and chatting with a really nice group of people about what they are interested in and sharing my own interests.’

Individuals do sterling work in looking out for their district, drawing on support and expertise from CPRE Sussex as a whole when needed. Major successes led by the group have included the extension of the South Downs National Park boundary, increasing the countryside protected by National Park status. ‘We would be in a much worse position today if that had not been achieved,’ says John.

Another success was in opposing the proposal to flood the valley adjoining ancient woodland at Plashett Park Farm to create a new reservoir at Clay Hill. CPRE Sussex provided witnesses at the enquiry who were persuasive in preventing the scheme. Another

“I look forward to those Tuesday evenings and chatting with a really nice group of people about what they are interested in and sharing my own interests.”

victory was the successful opposition to a land-raising plan (a type of landfill) on unspoilt countryside in Lewes and Wealden districts.

However, you cannot win them all, for example, the Glyndebourne wind turbine proposal. Looking ahead, John says, ‘At present proposals for giant new solar farms are becoming increasingly prominent in our agenda.’

Active members are key to achieving the Lewes group’s commitment to protect their countryside and keep members involved. There’s something for everyone and, as secretary Mary Greenwood says, ‘to join CPRE you just have to be an enthusiast!’ whether that’s for nature and the countryside generally or a particular area.

John’s view is that every group needs a convenor, people to organise events for members and friends and, importantly, people to focus on planning and protecting the countryside. ‘Every group needs someone who makes things happen and our secret weapon is Mary. Once a milk recorder, she’s supremely organised and in her own inimitable and unassuming way keeps everything ticking over smoothly – something she’s done now for many years.’

Lewes is fortunate to have active members from a wide geographical spread who know a lot of people. And as Mary says, ‘we’re lucky that we have a town as a focus in such a big rural area’.

Along the coast, there’s Gerald Summerfield who recently stepped down as Chairman and Branch

Trustee after many active, fruitful years. There’s also Roger Foxwell, a farming champion, and Philip Pople, a real countryman. Don Greenwood, whose son has taken over the family farm, lives at Swanborough and Margaret Moore in Ditchling. John and others live in the Low Weald, which he notes is ‘an area of Sussex countryside that has little or no formal protection, so several villages are besieged by aspirant developers’.

‘In an ideal world, every district group would have at least a couple of people monitoring the weekly planning application lists as we do,’ John says. CPRE Sussex is blessed with people who are exceptionally knowledgeable about planning, but they are not found in every district, so cover can be uneven. The new Protect Sussex Group will help us share planning expertise across our two counties and to support one another better.’

If you’d like to join your active local group please contact Lesley Wilson in the office.

David v Goliath

Anne Reynolds reports on the battle to prevent the building of a new school within the South Downs National Park.

A small group of parishioners from the parish of Woolbeding with Redford (total population 147) has won the first round in a battle against the state-funded Durand Academy to prevent the construction of a 375-pupil weekly boarding school on its parish boundary, in the South Downs National Park.

The Durand Education Trust (DET) purchased a 20-acre site, which included the former county council special needs school, 'St Cuthman's', in April 2010 and announced that it would construct a 625-pupil school in the grounds adjacent to the existing Grade 2 listed mansion. Once the local parish council heard of the scheme, it called a public meeting to brief local residents. A clear mandate was given for the parish to oppose the scheme and a six-member action group was formed.

The village, which had always co-operated with the former 100-strong St Cuthman's, was concerned that the increased volume of traffic on the narrow, steep-sided access roads and the size of the new-build, equivalent

to four superstores, would have a significant detrimental effect on the landscape. The application for a 625-strong school was submitted in March 2013, withdrawn, and permission for a 375-pupil school sought in October.

The parish knew that DET was being funded by the Department for Education at a cost of just over £19,000 per month and that the overall budget for the scheme, post planning approval, would be £17.34 million. In two years, DET spent over £300,000 on its PR budget. The parish council had an annual precept of just £3,000. 'We felt like David versus Goliath,' said Anne Reynolds, CPRE member and parish council chairman.

Determined to achieve a fair fight, the action group managed to raise £28,000 from concerned local residents. This money was spent on planning, traffic and environmental consultants and a planning barrister. The lobbying was done by action group members and resulted in meetings with the Education Funding Agency, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools. It also alerted the Public Accounts

"The committee's decision to listen to local opinion and to ignore expensive lobbying has restored my faith in the democratic process. I am now an active member of the National Park group of CPRE Sussex."

Committee and the National Audit Office who raised concerns about the project's viability with the DfE.

At the SDNPA committee meeting on 12 December last year, members voted to refuse planning permission. Durand has stated its intention to appeal. 'We feel vindicated,' said Anne Reynolds after the meeting. 'The committee's decision to listen to local opinion and to ignore expensive lobbying has restored my faith in the democratic process.' She continued: 'I am now an active member of the National Park (Chichester North) group of CPRE Sussex.'

Operation Turtle Dove

Adrian Podmore from the Sussex Ornithological Society explains what you can do to help save this special bird.

The Turtle Dove is an icon of the English countryside but it is now one of our most threatened species.

Well known in folklore and popular culture for its pairing for life, the Turtle Dove's arrival in spring is often heralded by its definitive 'purring' song which is perhaps one of the most evocative sounds of summer. Sadly, however, its current status is such that it is now considered it to be the second most likely bird (after the Hen Harrier) to become extinct in the UK by 2020.

One of the later summer migrants to Sussex and Europe's only migratory dove, the UK is at the northern edge of the Turtle Dove's range. Its preference is for dry sunny conditions with open woodland, farmland with copses, tall hedges, particularly those over 4m and mature scrub, especially that characterised by thorny shrubs such as hawthorn. Turtle Doves were probably as

widespread as they ever were in the 1960s and it has been estimated there were about 125,000 pairs nationally. Current numbers, however, may be down to around 14,000 pairs. This represents a breathtaking 90% reduction and a 60% drop in the five years to 2010.

Reasons for the dramatic decline have been widely circulated, including hunting in Europe and North Africa. But changes in agricultural practice have been at the forefront, too, particularly the increased use of herbicides and pesticides.

To attempt to redress this state of affairs, in May 2012, the RSPB and other groups launched Operation Turtle Dove. This is a three-year project to identify the primary causes of decline and develop urgent practical solutions.

These include encouraging farmers to maintain and create nesting and seed-rich foraging habitat through the Environmental

Stewardship Schemes. The RSPB advises that where possible, tall thick hedges should be maintained and encouraged, particularly those with climbers such as traveller's joy (wild clematis), honeysuckle or bramble.

You can also help by creating open, accessible garden ponds to attract the birds, which seem to favour breeding in places where there is ready access to standing open water. Seed can be put out on the ground in open areas or spare plots of land can be planted with fumitory, black medick, red and white clover and common vetch.

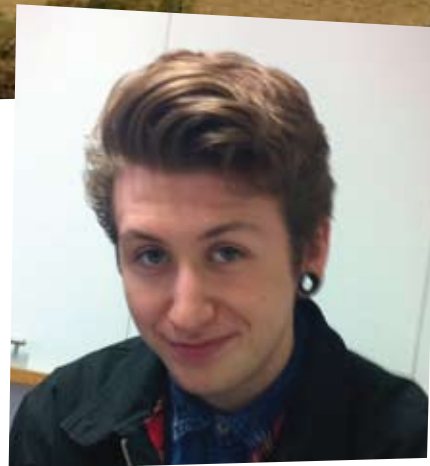
While undoubtedly saving this beautiful bird is a huge challenge, Operation Turtle Dove means there is still plenty of hope.

To find out more and report any Turtle Dove sightings please go to <http://operationturtledove.org/>



What the countryside means to me

In our new series, we are looking at why we should care about the countryside from a range of perspectives. Here 19-year-old Journalism student at City College Brighton & Hove, Philip (George) Rylands-Richey gives his view.



It's funny. I've been keeping up a blog about the countryside (georgerichey.tumblr.com, check it out) for a couple of months now, discussing what's going on and who's concerned, but not once have I explained just why I care about it so much.

And, in fairness, the environment is the sort of thing that nobody really needs to justify his or her concern for; I mean, it's the earth – if people carry on messing up with it then we're royally screwed, ladies and gentlemen.

However, when you're not in the sort of situation where your drinking water's getting spiked by fracking-related toxins, it's sometimes difficult to give a damn. If the gorgeous little area

where you like to take your King Charles Spaniel out for summer morning romps isn't set to be vandalized by development, why should you care?

Well, it's as simple as this, really: whilst there are a few lovely little areas still intact and unspoiled, how would you feel if they too got riddled with houses or other forms of development? Or to put it another way, how would you feel if wherever you looked, there wasn't a single area of countryside that didn't have somebody's rambling two-storey cottage spoiling the view? Or how about a big fat road scoring its way through the tranquility? The growl of lorries would scupper any chance of a peaceful afternoon stroll. In my opinion, that thought is suffocating and terrifying.

Because I've grown up in a part of Shoreham where Mill Hill is just a 20-minute walk away, having something natural and beautiful to look at is something I've always been used to. It's a right.

Going for a countryside wander with a few mates and no real direction is something I'm used to as well. Going to the downs, having

a bit of a trek and then heading to the nearest pub for a well-earned pint has become something of a tradition amongst us, I suppose.

I asked a couple of my mates on the course studying for the National Council for the Training of Journalists what the countryside meant to them, and here's what they had to say:

Joe Harvey, 19: 'Well, living in an urban town and everything, it's refreshing to be somewhere that isn't just grey bricks and tarmac for miles around. It feels fresh, you know? Undisturbed.'

James Dunham, 19: 'The countryside means a place to explore, to get away from inner-city life.'



**An invitation to our 41st AGM:
please make July 10th a firm date
in your diary!**

Plumpton revisited

This year we return to Plumpton College, the expanding and thriving home of East Sussex land-based education. Established in 1926, the College's 800-hectare estate is one of the largest and most diverse in the UK. Set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at the foot of the South Downs, it offers the ideal setting for our 2014 AGM.

The meeting will take place in the morning, beginning with welcome refreshments at 10am, followed by formal business, speakers on the theme of Sussex farming and the environment and ending in a scrumptious buffet lunch using local produce and ingredients grown and produced on the Plumpton Estate Farm.

Following lunch, we plan a tour of Plumpton's new state-of-the-art commercial Wine Centre, which is a short drive or enjoyable stroll from the meeting room through the Campus. The Winery produces award-winning wines and is Britain's Centre of Excellence in wine education, training and research.

The Booking Form, Annual Report and Agenda will be sent to all members by early June.

**Plumpton College,
Sussex Rural Business Centre,
Ditchling Road, Plumpton,
East Sussex BN7 3AE**



Come & join us!

If you love the Sussex countryside do come to one of the events we are hosting for country lovers and our members from across the county. Get together with like-minded people and enjoy a delicious home-made buffet lunch.

MAY

Saturday 17th May, 10am to 1pm
(lunch 1 – 2pm)

Billingshurst Centre, Roman Way, Billingshurst,
West Sussex RH14 9EW

JUNE

Saturday 14th June, 10am to 1pm
(lunch 1 – 2pm)

Herstmonceux Village Hall, Hailsham Rd,
Herstmonceux, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 4JX

- Meet with local campaigners and our volunteers.
- Find out about the planning concerns affecting your part of the world – share top tips for success with other local people responding to threats around their own areas.
- Hear the stories of local groups standing up for the countryside.
- Influence the Influencers – find out what makes a successful pressure group and campaign. Meet people from inspiring local groups and find out how you can shape the countryside in your area.
- Find out how you might use your experience, interests and skills to help protect and enrich your local countryside.

We look forward to meeting you!

NEWS FROM THE SUSSEX BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND

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Countryside Trust
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Blackboys, Uckfield,
East Sussex, TN22 5HG
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Email: info@cpresussex.org.uk
www.cpresussex.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter:

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Registered Charity number:
265028

For Membership Information
please contact the office
as above or join on line at
www.cpresussex.org.uk

RSVP – Please complete the enclosed reply card
and return it to the office or apply online at
www.cpresussex.org.uk