

2024 Impact Report

2024 was an eventful year for the Oxfordshire branch of CPRE, with a change of director, chair and president as well as a change of Government bringing with it planning reform. We had our challenges and our successes, which we'd like to share here.



Tree ID and recording at Dornford Lane on Blenheim Estate. The lane faces becoming a sterile corridor through Botley West solar farm

Protection and enhancement of the countryside via planning

Contributed to the national CPRE response to the new National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) consultation.

Contributed extensively to Local Plans as they developed, including the Oxford City Local Plan and the South and Vale "Preferred Options" consultations (see planning report on page 11 for details).

Volunteers in our district committees continue to work hard responding at a level on many planning applications which impact the countryside, not always simply objecting, but also often calling for considerations around light pollution, wildlife and biodiversity impacts and traffic which can significantly improve a developments impact.

Supporting networks

Took part in Oxfordshire Environment Board's Land Use Vision Round Table with other key Oxfordshire organisations.

Supported the development and mapping of Oxfordshire's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), outlining Oxfordshire's biodiversity priorities for nature recovery.

Our Hedgerow Heroes project cemented our relationship with Wild Oxfordshire for the fourth year running.

We continue to work, liaise and communicate regularly with our parish council networks.

Campaigning for the countryside

As part of our continued campaign against the **Botley West** solar farm we organised a well-attended walk along Dornford Lane, an ancient hedgerow under threat, which made its way onto several news channels.

A Freedom of Information request unearthed the Environment Agency's advice not to go ahead with the proposed **Abingdon Reservoir** and we submitted a detailed response to the consultation. We continue to call for a public inquiry and have now requested a Judicial Review.

We **met with MPs** Charlie Maynard (to talk about affordable housing) and Olly Glover (discussing Abingdon reservoir), continuing to nurture relationships with key decision makers.

We also supported the private '**Sunshine Bill**', aiming to make solar panels standard in all new homes. The bill secured a commitment from the Government to ensure that solar energy will form part of amended building regulations to be rolled out later in 2025. Over 10,000 responses went to MP's across the UK.

We campaigned for the successful rejection of **two solar farms**: one proposed for the middle of Otmoor on the Oxfordshire Green Belt, the other on open countryside at Godington, a tiny village near Stratton Audley. Sadly, we are seeing both of these sites go to appeal, so our fight continues.

THANK YOU for your continued support, without which none of this would have been possible.

Countryside improvement



Hedgerow Heroes

Hedgerow Heroes. Our fourth year saw hedgerow planting and rejuvenation projects in 15 different locations across Oxfordshire. We surpassed our planting target by over 1km, collectively planting approximately 3.3km of new hedgerow and rejuvenating over 600 m of hedgerow with nearly 400 volunteers, and four hedgelaying workshops training 30 people.

Dark skies. Richard Harding, our former Chair, has been delivering talks across the county, highlighting this important issue and we took our Dark Skies stall to Greener Henley's Nature Discover Day in June. We believe our campaigning on the issues around light pollution and its effect on nature, have been instrumental in steering Oxfordshire County Council to consider adopting a Dark Skies policy, subject to public consultation.

In May, we marked the completion of the current stage of our Oxford Green Belt Way improvement project (which replaced nine stiles with accessible, self-closing gates) with a celebratory walk around Nuneham Courtenay and Marsh Baldon. The project was implemented by Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Team, made possible through a grant from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) with funding from Grundon.



Ardley Energy Recovery Facility

Community engagement

Hosted a **Countryside & Environment General Election Hustings** in the run up to the general election, chaired by CPRE national director, Roger Mortlake, attended by almost 100 members of the public.

Took part in Henley's **Great Big Green Week** with our Dark Skies stall.

We commissioned a survey into **public attitudes to the Green Belt** and found that 80% of respondents wanted the Green Belt to remain undeveloped – an increase of 10% from 10 years ago!

Teamed up with **Refugee Resource** to take a group of women on a trip to Harcourt Arboretum.

In September we joined forces with CPRE Berkshire on the county boundary in Goring and Streatley for our first ever **Countryside Day**, the CPRE network's new annual

celebration of rural England, inspiring us to protect and promote it for future generations.

We continued with our ongoing recruitment of planning volunteers, **"Green defenders"** to monitor planning applications in their local areas and feed through to the branch and local committees. We developed training material, including short videos to assist them and hope to continue to grow numbers this year.

Attended and hosted events including two **Open Gardens**, the **Oxford Green Fair**, a trip to the **Ardley Energy Recovery Facility**, plus local talks.



Countryside Day



Refugee Resource



Oxford Green Fair