

2025–26 Impact Report

Protecting, restoring and championing
Oxfordshire's countryside

Countryside improvement

Hedgerow Heroes

A record-breaking year for hands-on conservation:

- 800 volunteers mobilised
- 4,778.5m of hedgerow planted and restored (exceeding target by 500m)
- 43 schools, charities and community groups engaged across 26 sites
- 9 training workshops delivered to 70 participants
- Hosted novice hedge laying competition



Countryside Next Door

Launched as part of CPRE's centenary, this ambitious project will:

- Restore neglected meadows in Oxford's Green Belt
- Protect endangered grasslands
- Reconnect local communities with nature on their doorstep

We're set to take part in the Big Give Earth Raise, unlocking up to £10,000 in match funding to accelerate this work.

65 planning
applications
reviewed

Over one-third challenged
through formal
objections...

...for others we called for
conditions to improve areas such
as biodiversity, light pollution,
access and traffic

Climate action

Rooftop Renewables

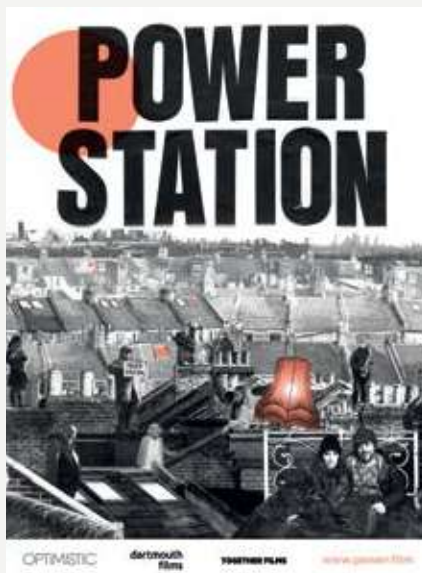
We launched a pilot to make rooftop solar more accessible in Sonning Common:

- Community screening of *Power Station* documentary
- Two practical workshops at the Village Hall
- 3 events, 30 residents engaged

Working in partnership with EcoSoco, Sonning Common Parish Council, R-Eco Co-op, Cosy Homes Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire County Council.

What's next?

Funding secured from Vale of White Horse District Council means expansion is coming in 2026.



We played a
key role in
influencing 4
Local Plans

Campaigning wins & action

- Defended the countryside in the High Court on the Abingdon reservoir case
- Challenged Botley West solar farm at examination stage
- Stopped development at Waterstock, saving 100 acres of Green Belt
- Protected Land Behind the Moors from 340-home proposal

We also:

- Advocated for strong rural planning principles
- Engaged MPs at Westminster and locally on climate and countryside protection

Raising our voice

Our work reached national and regional audiences, with coverage in: Oxford Mail, BBC, Financial Times, The Guardian, Planning Magazine ...alongside local press, radio and TV.

National & Strategic Input

We also responded to major proposals and consultations, including:

- Abingdon reservoir
- Botley West solar farm
- Oxford street lighting
- Land use framework
- North Wessex Downs Management Plan
- Local government reorganisation

Supporting networks

We expanded and strengthened partnerships with:

- Wild Oxfordshire
- Oxford Friends of the Earth
- Greener Henley
- RHS in Bloom (centenary award launch for 2026)
- Local campaign groups including GARD, Stop Botley West, and Land Behind the Moors

Community Engagement

Connecting people with the countryside through:

- FarmED visit
- Oxford Green Fair
- Two **Power Station** screenings
- AGM walk at Long Mead
- Campaigning workshop with Oxford Friends of the Earth
- Three dark skies talks
- Launch of the Oxford Green Belt Way Challenge



Claudia Lusardi

Thank you

None of this would be possible without your support. Together, we're protecting and enhancing Oxfordshire's countryside for generations to come.

Another NPPF consultation and Local Plan updates

A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued for consultation on 16 December 2025, with responses submitted by 10 March 2026. Alongside contributing to CPRE's national response, CPRE Oxfordshire highlighted several key concerns for our county.

- The concept and definition of "Greybelt". While originally intended to enable development on poor-quality or previously developed Green Belt land, such as outbuildings, we are increasingly seeing it used by developers to justify building on open countryside—an interpretation we strongly oppose.
- The lack of emphasis on infrastructure. The NPPF assumes that planning decisions can be made on land use alone, with other regulatory systems functioning effectively. In Oxfordshire, this has proved problematic: thousands of approved homes—over 11,000 in Cherwell alone—have stalled due to insufficient water and wastewater capacity, largely linked to Thames Water constraints. National policy must ensure that development cannot proceed without essential infrastructure in place.
- Concerns about a default "yes" approach to development around rail stations, which risks overlooking local context, including Green Belt protections and environmental constraints.
- Higher targets for genuinely affordable homes in rural areas.

Local Plans progress

Oxford City: We have responded to the City's Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation. At this stage we can comment only on the soundness and legality of the Policies and sites presented and request representation at

the Inspectors hearings which we expect later in the year. Key issues include enabling brownfield employment sites to transition to housing, stronger infrastructure requirements—especially for water and sewerage—better connectivity of green infrastructure, climate resilience, and protection of community green spaces.

Cherwell: Initial Local Plan hearings began in February, covering transitional arrangements, Oxford's unmet housing need (currently 4,400 homes), and cross-boundary cooperation. Further information has been submitted, and we await the next stage. We support the Plan's progression, as it is vital for establishing a five-year housing supply and reducing speculative development, which we are seeing a lot of.

Recent success includes refusal of a proposed development at "Land behind the Moors" in Kidlington, which we argued was not suitable for "Greybelt" classification, due to it being an open countryside site, rich in wildlife and with well used public footpaths running through it.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse: The Joint Local Plan is back under review following earlier concerns about the Duty to Cooperate. Inspectors are now progressing the Plan, pending an updated Sustainability Appraisal.

We remain supportive, particularly as it avoids new Green Belt development, though speculative applications remain a concern, along with the potential for 'Grey Belt' development.

West Oxfordshire: We responded to the Local Plan 2041 Reg 18 Spatial Strategies consultation, emphasising protection of countryside, infrastructure-first development, improved sewage capacity, higher-density housing, and better transport provision.

Public feedback has broadly supported these views, and we await the next consultation stage later this year.