

Campaign to Protect Rural England, Somerset Branch

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 1.00pm, 18th October 2019 Chard Guild Hall

The AGM itself started at 1pm. There were present:

Roger Martin, President
Chris Lewis, Chairman
David Julian, Executive Member
Don Parkinson, Executive Member
John Roberts Executive Member & Honorary Treasurer
Fletcher Robinson, Executive Member
Hugh Williams, Executive Member

In addition Becky Collier (Branch Manager), Judith Chubb-Whittle (CPRE Somerset Planner), Richard de Peyer (minute taker), 35 CPRE members plus 9 non members; the attendance list is held by the Branch Manager.

Apologies For Absence - the following members of Somerset CPRE had sent their apologies: Cathy Nicholls (Executive Member), Tim Whittingham (Executive member), Roger Stoakley, Rev Elsie Howell, Merida Drysdale, Eileen Heath, John Elder, Tom & Elizabeth Fortescue-Hitchins, James Nicholas, Helen Hazlewood, Jill Fuller, Anna Bushell, Sally & Mike Bainbridge

Other apologies were received from: Cate Le Grice Mack – CPRE Avonside, Sarah Bryan – Chief Executive, Exmoor National Park Authority, Cindy Carter – Mendip Hills AONB Planning Officer and David Worskett – Chair, CPRE Avonside.

Confirmation of the minutes of the 2018 AGM – the minutes of the last AGM, held on 25th October 2018, had been circulated ahead of the meeting and were signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising – there were no matters arising.

Annual Report 2018 & Accounts –

The Chairman referred to highlights of 2019 year including:

1. Four Green Clean events held in partnership with Frome Litter Warriors, Rage Against Rubbish, Wells City Council and Haselbury Plucknett Parish Council. Somerset Wildlife Trust also adopted the Green Clean approach for some of the events in the Great Taunton Litter Pick. 137 volunteers had participated collecting 139 bags of rubbish broken down to 776 plastic bottles, over 1100 cans, 348 glass bottles, and 54 cartons.
2. More grants had been given out under the finger post project funded by Hinkley Point C Community Fund.
3. The branch had promoted National Star Count 2019 highlighting worsening light pollution across Somerset.
4. The Somerset CPRE Photographic competition entries had been projected as members arrived for the AGM. Jonathan Bull's photograph of 'Glastonbury Tor silhouettes' had been chosen as the winner and a cheque was presented. The Chairman thanked Kit Houghton for helping to judge the entries.
5. The branch had again sponsored a landscape painting prize in the Bruton Art Society summer exhibition. The winner was Thea Du Pays for her painting entitled "Harbourside"
6. Successful visits for members and guests had been made to Wyke Farm Cheese Factory and to the Carymoor Environmental Trust at the Castle Cary landfill site.

7. Judith Chubb-Whittle had been appointed as part time Planner advising the branch on planning matters. During the most recent 6 months the branch had scrutinised over 150 planning applications making 30 written responses, speaking at three committee meetings and submitting evidence to the Glover Review of National Parks and AONBs.

The Chairman thanked Becky Collier and Judith Chubb-Whittle for all their efforts in the planning arena.

Treasurers Report: Everyone present had received a copy of the 2018-9 Annual Report and accounts ending December 2018. John Roberts, Treasurer, gave an overview of the accounts, explaining that income was down slightly as the branch had received a legacy the previous year. Overheads have increased since the decision to take on a part time Planner at an estimated cost of £10k pa. Trustees had agreed to do this as an experiment, subject to review in the future but had reappointed to the post during the year following its success. Overall, the Branch is in a healthy position and as the SOS Appeal 2017/8 had generated an unexpectedly good response, a second appeal was now under consideration. Accounts had been scrutinized by an independent examiner who had confirmed that there were no additional matters to which members' attention should be drawn. They were passed following proposal by Roger Martin and seconded by Fletcher Robinson.

Chris thanked the other volunteers for all that they do, in particular:

- All this year's Trustees – David Julian, David Lloyd, Cathy Nicholls, Don Parkinson, John Roberts, Fletcher Robinson, Hugh Williams, Tim Whittingham
- Particular thanks to Cathy Nicholls and David Lloyd who are stepping down as Trustees because they have served for 9 years, which our constitution does not allow. We are grateful for their hard work and wisdom and will miss them greatly – and we hope they will stay in touch.
- John Roberts for his efficient and organised work as our Treasurer. John also has served his term so will have to step down as Trustee but will stay on as our Volunteer Treasurer.
- Phil Michael for auditing the accounts
- Fletcher Robinson for his enthusiastic work as Planning Volunteer for South Somerset
- Richard de Peyer for acting as Volunteer Minute Taker
- Roger Martin for continuing as our President
- Ferelith Drummond for hosting Mendip Group meetings and looking after our gazebo.
- Vernon Hughes and Hugh Williams for helping to run the stand at the Green Scythe Fair in June
- Everyone who joined in one of our Green Cleans this September – especially Janette Ward, CPRE SW Chair and Somerset member who bravely shared a canoe with Becky on the canal in Bridgwater!
- Mike Merrifield for keeping us up to date with planning matters in Taunton – and sending us regular press cuttings.
- Kit Houghton for judging our landscape photography competition and everyone who entered the competition
- Ordinary members who continue to support us by remaining members
- Finally – many thanks to everyone who has helped to make today happen – all the speakers for giving up their time and travelling some distance, Trustees and staff for their hands-on help and all of you for attending.

Roger Martin proposed a vote of thanks to Chris Lewis and he was warmly applauded by all present.

Questions: - In response to an invitation for any questions the meeting was addressed by Peter Thompson who introduced himself as a member from Henstridge and raised questions concerning the priorities of the Branch and CPRE generally. The Chairman invited Mr Thompson to talk to him on a future occasion and after some time Mr Thompson withdrew.

Election of Directors/Trustees – Roger Martin, President, took the Chair at this point. Nominations had been received for Chris Lewis, Don Parkinson, John Roberts, Fletcher Robinson, Hugh Williams David Julian and Tim Whittingham to be Executive Members. Election was unanimously supported by those present.

Election of President – Chris Lewis took the Chair again and explained that a nomination had been received for Roger Martin as President. Roger’s election was proposed by Don Parkinson and seconded by Fletcher Robinson and was approved unanimously.

New Articles of Association: Revisions had been made to the branch constitution incorporating advice from National Office and circulated to members with the meeting notification. A list of the changes proposed was available on demand. Members unanimously voted to adopt the new constitution.

New CPRE Brand identity: The Chairman invited Crispin Truman, CPRE Chief Executive to describe the changes which followed the ‘Purpose Project’ consultation exercise involving substantial external research and member consultation. Crispin explained that the new brand was as a tool for achieving revisions to the CPRE objectives with the aim of reaching all sorts of people from different backgrounds. The new organisational strategy for the period until the CPRE 100th anniversary in 2026 has four main aims:

- Connect People and Countryside
- Promote rural life
- Empower communities
- Grow our capacity

- with responding to the climate emergency as a cross cutting theme throughout the strategy.

Any Other Business –

Henry Best Questioned the purpose, value and cost of the new branding and challenged the importance of climate change highlighted in the CPRE mailings rather than population as a principal threat to the countryside. Fletcher Robinson countered that he viewed the logo and repurposing of the CPRE as a conspicuous success. Crispin Truman felt that the previous branding had demonstrated its inadequacy and that ‘the proof of the pudding’ would be in its results! He defended the emphasis on climate change as a good argument for changes to countryside policy and that the CPRE role was to manage impacts.

Brenda Watson (Somerset West and Taunton Deane Council) enquired whether the branch had been involved in the council’s declaration of climate emergency. Hugh Williams confirmed that he had participated in the development of the South Somerset DC Environmental Strategy.

Roger Martin (President) expressed his concern about population impacts.

In response to a final question about National Parks and CPRE from Mike Merrifield, Chris confirmed that the branch had contributed to the Glover Review and Crispin Truman advised that National Office had taken this seriously and highlighted that 95% of visits to National Parks were made by car.

The meeting closed at 3.40 pm with thanks to the Chairman.

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Prof. Chris Lewis, Chairman CPRE Somerset

Date: