

**Campaign to Protect Rural England, Somerset  
Minutes of Annual General Meeting.  
Held at Williams Hall, Stoke St Gregory  
Friday 24th November 2023**

The Rooftop Revolution event was held before the AGM with presentations by Mariella Frostrup (CPRE Somerset President), Chris Hinchliff (CPRE Campaigns Manager), Karen Squibb-Williams (Solar Campaign Alliance) George Dunn (Tenant Farmers Association), Clare Bottle (UK Warehousing Association) and Tim Cook (Solarsense). 95 people attended in total.

The AGM started at 3.45pm. There were present:

Hugh Williams, Chairman, Somerset CPRE  
Gerhard Hattingh, Executive Member  
Vernon Hughes, Executive Member  
Sarah Hutchison, Executive Member  
David Julian, Executive Member  
Jan Owen, Executive Member  
John Roberts Executive Member & Honorary Treasurer  
Fletcher Robinson, Executive Member & Planning Consultant  
Janette Ward, Executive Member

In addition, Roger Mortlock, (CEO of CPRE), Becky Collier, (Branch Manager) plus 24 CPRE members. The attendance list is held by the Branch Manager.

**1. Apologies for absence** were received from the following members Chris Lewis (Executive Member), Annabel Campbell, Henry Best, Philip Massie-Blomfield, Helen Hazlewood, Tim Whittingham, Roger Stoakley, Dan & Glen Clark

**2. Confirmation of the minutes** of the previous AGM – Minutes had been circulated and were confirmed as a correct record.

**3. Matters Arising** - there were none.

**4. 2022 accounts:** The Treasurer, John Roberts presented his report. He explained that the accounts previously circulated had contained an error, but this had been corrected and a new version circulated, which had been checked by an external auditor. Linda Bennett queried why the Gift Aid amount was relatively small. John said that some of this had not been claimed yet. The reserves have continued at a stable level. Overheads were up slightly as new office equipment had been purchased and staff rates of pay had been increased, plus we were using our own funds to pay the fingerpost grants. Interest on the savings account has increased, but, as a charity, we are unable to access some of the highest interest rates available to some savers.

**5. Election of trustees:** Becky Collier, CPRE Somerset Manager, took the chair and reported nominations received for trustees. We have sadly had to say farewell to 3 long serving Trustees this year (Chris Lewis, Don Parkinson and Tim Whittingham) as they had completed their maximum term. Gerhard Hattingh and Jan Owen had been co-opted as Trustees in the spring and were up for election now. Nominations had been received for members of the existing board, namely Hugh Williams, Gerhard Hatting, Vernon Hughes, Sarah Hutchison, David Julian, Jan Owen, John Roberts, Fletcher Robinson, and Janette Ward, plus a new nominee, Jenny Raggett. These were proposed for election by Becky Collier and seconded by Mike Merrifield. On a show of hands all were appointed. Mariella Frostrup was proposed by David Julian, seconded by Janette Ward, and re-elected as President.

**6. Review of the Year:** presented by Hugh Williams, Chair. Hugh played a short video showing highlights and achievements this year. The charity has a strong board of Trustees, with some new blood. Funding is stable and we are engaging with new audiences.

Hugh then gave his thanks as follows: All this year's Trustees – Vernon Hughes, Sarah Hutchison, Chris Lewis, David Julian, Don Parkinson, John Roberts, Fletcher Robinson, Janette Ward, Hugh Williams, Tim Whittingham, plus our newly co-opted Trustees - Jan Owen and Gerhard Hattingh. A special thank you and farewell to our former Chair, Chris Lewis, and to Don Parkinson and Tim Whittingham who have had to step down after being Trustees for many years, in line with our constitution. We thank them for their support, and we hope they will stay in touch.

Mariella Frostrup for being our President, for giving up her time for events like today and writing such interesting articles for our newsletters.

John Roberts for his work as our Treasurer and Phil Michael for auditing the accounts. Fletcher Robinson for his hard work as our Planner and Becky Collier, Manager, who made events like today happen.

Richard de Peyer our Volunteer Minute Taker. Richard has now stepped down from this role so if anyone else would like to volunteer to take minutes at our meetings, please contact Becky! Catherine Anderson – our Volunteer Photographer. Thanks to Catherine and to Jeff Hutson for letting us use their photos for our lovely Christmas cards.

National CPRE – especially Roger Mortlock and Chris Hinchliff for coming today and Louis Smith-Lassey for producing our GIS solar map.

Donald Rice for raising funds for us at his open garden event.

**Litter Project:** thank you to our generous benefactor who has donated funds for the last 3 years, enabling us to buy more kits. To All of our Litterpicking Volunteers! All our Trustees and Mike & Angela Merrifield who are helping to deliver kits Tincknells Country Store, Wells for giving us free use of a shipping container to store the equipment. Thanks also to Somerset Duke of Edinburgh Team for helping to get our new project going with SEN schools – including Avalon School (Street), Fairmead School (Yeovil), Foxes Academy (Minehead) plus Sexey's School and Army Cadets (Bruton)

**Finally:** Thank you to everyone who has bought a lottery ticket or a bag or Christmas cards – or sponsored a litterpicking kit. Everyone who supported our events this year and to Robin Morrison for giving up his time to give a wonderful talk on his nature photography. Andrew Lee for regularly covering planning and housing issues in The Leveller. Everyone who follows us on social media and likes and shares our posts. Everyone who has signed the solar petition.

And, of course, loyal CPRE members who continue to support us by remaining members.

**Photo competition:** This year's theme was **Somerset: wild at heart**. We received 110 entries and a slide show had been shown during the tea break of all the entries. Hugh thanked everyone who entered and thanked his fellow judges – Kit Houghton, Andrew Lee (The Leveller), Ross Alexander (Moment Photography, Bridgwater). Hugh then presented cheques for £100 each and certificates to the winners: Becky Davies (adult) for "True love's dance" and Zara Lewis (under 18s) for "King of the reservoir".

**9. National update:** Roger Mortlock, CEO of CPRE, gave a brief update on national CPRE campaigns and future plans. CPRE has a strong heritage and an important role to play as one of the few organisations taking a holistic view of land use. CPRE will continue to work in collation with other groups on issues like nature, farming and water and is an active partner in the Better Planning Coalition, which is working effectively to make changes in Govt. policy. The next year will be crucial in influencing a future government, so CPRE has launched its own manifesto in readiness and have been attending party conferences. CPRE's centenary is in 2026 and Roger would love for CPRE to launch a big milestone idea to celebrate that. Green Belt will be a battle ground for housing, and we need to think creatively how to use it and celebrate it. Affordable and social housing must become a priority. Getting younger people involved is a priority and countryside for all is a key theme. All our work must be cross-checked against the climate and nature crisis.

Fletcher Robinson asked for Roger's views on Labour's attitude to building in the Green Belt. Roger said some development in the green belt makes sense, but he would challenge Labour's messaging. He felt terms like "grey belt" and using "scrub" as a disparaging word were unfortunate. Gerhard Hatting said we should operate under the idea that every village has its own green belt, as it is the countryside next door that is valued by local people.

Mary Acland-Hood asked about transport and her own bug bear of the difficulties of walking on rural lanes. She is working on a "Living Lanes" project. Roger said CPRE has been looking again at transport policy and we need to identify what CPRE can do specifically.

Fiona Torrens-Spence spoke of how, when Parish Councils ask for solar on new developments, they are told that this will be dealt with by building regulations – and it isn't! The same applies to homes that are off the sewage grid. Roger agreed that this situation was woeful but felt that it is the responsibility of national government to set standards for sustainable homes. Hugh added that his Parish Council is aware of a sewage problem in his village, and they absolutely insist on any new development having mains sewage.

Alan Townsend from Coleford PC was concerned about the lack of 5-year housing land supply in the Mendip Local Plan and how the new Somerset Local Plan will be in place until 2028, prolonging the inability of the new Unitary Council to refuse new developments. Fletcher agreed that this is a problem. He added that we are also waiting for the phosphates issue to be resolved. There are currently 5000 homes in South Somerset with planning consent that can't be built until this is resolved, so it is very

difficult to increase the housing land supply figures. He hopes that housing figures might be dropped as mandatory and will become advisory, but we will have to wait until revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework come through.

**10. Any other business** - none

Hugh thanked Roger and thanked members for attending. The meeting closed at 4.50pm

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Hugh Williams, Chairman CPRE Somerset

Date:.....