



Hello from the Director

I am incredibly proud of what our small team have achieved since Winter. We have secured another year's funding from CPRE to roll out the Hedgerow restoration work across the West of England which means we will be working in South Gloucestershire, BANES and North Somerset from Autumn.

Farmers play a really important role in nature recovery in the countryside, it is vital that we win their hearts and mind in support of hedgerow restoration. So, we have secured a Farming in Protected Landscape Grant to support them and local communities in the Mendip Hills National Landscape to better manage hedgerows for nature. We will be getting this work underway at our [Countryside Day](#) on the 8th of September! Please find more details about this event on page 2.

Given our focus on farms and working with landowners to promote hedgerow restoration, it feels fitting that we are holding our AGM at the award-winning regenerative farm – Fernhill Farm in the Mendip Hills, Somerset. We are keen to champion the role of farming, from its vital role in the rural economy to its integral function of maintaining our food security. Farms like Fernhill farm are leading the way for landowners in nature recovery and sustainable agriculture. They are demonstrating how farming can buttress the rural economy while delivering on nature recovery and net zero targets.

The team are currently working hard designing a programme and assembling speakers, but the day will be

focused on the rich cultural and natural heritage of the hedgerows. We will be hearing about the habitats they provide for declining species, the income for land-workers and their role in mitigating against climate change, as well as the craft of hedgelaying and its context within rural heritage, the people, the places and the practice.

We will also be telling you about our project, 'Hedgerow Heroes' and how we have been re-invigorating the hedgerow network in the West Country. By engaging volunteers, we have been helping to keep the rural tradition of hedgelaying alive while creating, expanding and connecting vital habitats.

As an extension to the hedgerow restoration project, CPRE Avon and Bristol have been thinking about how we can make our engagement practice more inclusive and attract more diverse audiences. We have been speaking with young people of colour (through our partnership with Babbasa) to hear their views on careers in nature and land-based jobs. It's been fascinating to uncover the factors that influence young people's decision-making. The insights from young people have been thought provoking on the role professionals have in supporting diverse groups to understand access points and progression routes into the nature and land-based sector. Read more about this on page 3.

As always, thank you for your support. I really hope to see you at our [Countryside Day](#) on September 8th.

Mary-Jane Wilshire, Director, CPRE
Avon and Bristol

Countryside Day and AGM

We are excited to be holding this year's Countryside Day and AGM at Fernhill Farm, an incredible regenerative farm located in the Mendip Hills National Landscape in Somerset.

With funding from the Farming in Protected Landscape programme, CPRE Avon and Bristol's Countryside Day is a celebration of the social, ecological, and economic value regenerative farming brings to the countryside, with a particular focus on the value of hedgerows.

The day will involve talks and demonstrations from several exemplars for nature-friendly management and hedgerow protection. We will be showcasing how hedgerows deliver nature recovery, connect us to the local heritage, enhance our landscapes, build climate resilience, and of course help farmers manage livestock for a sustainable farm system.

The venue is a wonderful example of nature-friendly management in terms of its thriving farming system, its success in nature recovery, and the passion and innovation of the owners who serve their community. We are excited to have owners, and champion sheep-shearers, Andy Wear and Jennifer Hunter join us to show us around their farm and talk us through their [fibre franchise](#).

[Book your tickets here](#)

Landowners event

We will also be using Fernhill Farm as our venue for an event we are holding later in the year for private landowners interested in implementing best practice hedgerow management.

Landowners will find out more about specific agricultural environmental schemes, the grants available for trees and hedgerows, and how these can be used together.

The session will also provide an introduction to agronomy and arable cropping, the value of trees and hedgerows,

Address: Fernhill Farm, Cheddar Road, Compton Martin, Somerset, Bristol, BS40 6LD



Fernhill Farm, the venue for our Countryside Day and AGM

The day will kick off at 10:30am and end around 3pm.

There is onsite parking, but we have also arranged for a minibus to ensure our members with transport limitations and mobility impairments can access the event. This service is also available to those who simply prefer not to drive. The minibus will be free and leave from Bristol Temple Meads Station at [10am](#), returning around [3:30pm](#). Please indicate in your ticket booking whether you will be using this service.

AGM

We are combining this year's Countryside Day with our Annual General Meeting. Papers for the meeting will be made available on our website by early August. We will be in touch with our members regarding our AGM nearer the date.

integrated pest management, threats of certain species selection, and the value to livestock enterprise.

The aim is to understand how to maximise the use of new and existing trees and hedge land features on farms to maximise benefits for the farming system, landscape, and the environment.

Keep an eye on our [website](#) and [social media](#) for updates on the event or contact info@cpreavonandbristol.org.uk for more information.

A Countryside for all

Here at CPRE Avon and Bristol we are committed to a 'Countryside for all', helping everyone access the benefits brought by spending time in our natural landscapes.

Research into the issue shows that access to the countryside is limited by income, disability and especially race, with children of colour half as likely to visit the countryside compared to white children.

CPRE commissioned the New Economic Foundation into the factors that affect underrepresented groups getting involved in the countryside. It found that people of colour were deterred due to experiences of racism and lack of information on the subject.

People from ethnically diverse backgrounds are also less likely to be involved in nature and land-based jobs. The environmental sector is one of the least ethnically diverse in the UK, with just 4.81% of professionals identifying as Black, Asian or from other minority ethnic groups, compared to 12.64% across all UK professions (Bristol Ecological Society, 2022).

Motivated by CPRE's national campaign, we are now taking this work forward to address inequality and access to the countryside in underrepresented groups. CPRE Avon and Bristol are particularly focused on engaging with young people to open up career pathways and increase their awareness of the benefits the countryside can bring.

We have been working with Babbasa, a Bristol-based company working to increase the employment opportunities for young ethnically diverse individuals through personal development, mentoring, and networking opportunities.

With a grant we secured from D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, we co-designed a series of engagement activities with young people from a variety of backgrounds, including focus groups and questionnaires. Participants were able to share their views as to what the cultural and social barriers were to accessing nature-based jobs.

The survey found that only 6% of participants were confident in their knowledge of the different career opportunities within the green sector. When asked what their biggest barrier was, 62.5% of young people reported they didn't feel they had the right skills or qualifications, with 25% reporting they felt there was a lack of representation of people like them in the sector.

"I know there is a big push to get young people into green jobs, but I don't know what these jobs are or where to find them."

– Participant, 22, Somali

We have used this information to inform a funding application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund to foster a long-term project with Babbasa to engage young people of colour in hedgerow restoration and give them advice, information and guidance on accessing career pathways in nature conservation or farming.



Continued overleaf >

Our director, Mary-Jane, and Hedgerow Heroes Sarah Sawyer at the Babbasa event, May 8th

“It is so important that professional mentors and young people are brought together on these issues. We are excited to be working with Babbasa to help increase young people’s involvement in the green sector.”

– Mary-Jane Wilshire, Director
CPRE Avon and Bristol

Welcoming more members and volunteers will bring together different perspectives, experiences, and insights to inform how we can collectively plan a future for our countryside.

Read more about the work CPRE are doing to combat inequality in the environmental sector [here](#).

Would you like to take part in a paid opportunity to report on our Countryside Day?

To further this work, we have been allocated funding to work with two young people to report on our Countryside Day on September 8th, which will be taking place in the Mendip Hills in Somerset.

We are looking for people aged 18 – 25 years old to attend our event and produce a digital record using their smart phone. This is a paid opportunity, and all travel and subsistence costs will be reimbursed.

- Can you take good photos and videos?
- Can you edit photos and videos to create an engaging narrative?
- Can you bring ideas on how to promote the digital content to young people online?
- Can you interview people?
- Can you produce a report following the event?

If this sounds like something you’d be interested in, please register your interest at info@cpreavonandbristol.org.uk.

Thank you to our Volunteers

In conjunction with [Volunteers’ Week](#), we want to say a massive thank you to all our incredible volunteers who get involved with our 'Hedgerow Heroes' hedgelaying projects.

Last winter our Hedgerow Heroes volunteers accumulated over 972 volunteer hours! We would like to give an extra big thank you to a few of our fantastic volunteers...

Thank you to Steve Coates who brought considerable Hedgelaying skill to share with us all. As well as Rosemary Kerr and James Hourigan who put in the hours, and the children and staff from the Snapdragons nursery.

Thank you to Gary Walker who attended the most volunteer sessions last winter, amounting to over 52 volunteer hours!



Gary Walker volunteering at one of our Hedgerow Heroes projects in Yate.

"I volunteer for Hedgerow Heroes because it's a practical way for me to contribute to improving our local environment for both the community and wildlife. We use the traditional hedge laying skills, shown to us by the CPRE team, to revive and rebuild hedgerows. I'm very proud to have learnt even the basics of such a traditional skill. We work in some lovely places around our area and it's always fulfilling to work with so many like-minded volunteers to repair and refresh a hedgerow. No job is ever the same and come rain or shine, it's always interesting and enjoyable. It gives me a great sense of achievement to see our rows of newly planted saplings for future hedgerows."

Gary Walker, Hedgerow Heroes Volunteer



Wooden mallets made by Clive Hill and Mark Forsyth.

And finally, a special mention to Clive Hill & Mark Forsyth for both creating homemade wooden mallets for placing hedgelaying stakes.

Every volunteer makes such a difference, and we really appreciate your help!

Hedgerow Heroes Volunteer Celebration Event

On June 7 our Hedgerow Heroes Project Officer, Sonia Parsons, held an event to celebrate the end of our Hedgerow Heroes Phase 3 projects, and to celebrate all the wonderful volunteers that help at our planting events.

We welcomed volunteers who have helped in South Gloucestershire or Bath & North East Somerset, as well as employees from the Bath Parks team, to celebrate all their hard work. We enjoyed a nice pub lunch and were joined by guest speaker Megan Gimber from the People's Trust for Endangered Species, delivering a talk on the importance of hedgerows ecologically and best practice management. Professional hedgelayer, Mike Reed, also delivered a talk on coppicing and its link to hedgelaying, bringing with him a display of hedgelaying tools.

We ended the event with a short local walk around Weston, part of which was through Archery Field where we have laid a hedgerow and planted some native wildflowers.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our celebration event, and especially everyone who has volunteered in the past but couldn't make it. Without you we wouldn't be able to make such a difference in our green spaces, you are the true heroes here at CPRE Avon and Bristol. If you or anyone you know is interested in volunteering for Hedgerow Heroes at CPRE Avon and Bristol, please contact Sonia at sonia@cpreavonandbristol.org.uk.



Guest speaker Megan Gimber from the People's Trust for Endangered Species, delivering a talk on the importance of hedgerows

General Election

An era-defining election is only a few days away. We have shared our Manifesto for the next government, read it [here](#).

We're calling on all political parties to recognise the true value of the countryside and its vital role in answering the nation's challenges – with a focus on the four policies summarised below.

A planning system for people, planet and nature

National planning policy should listen to the voices of local people, and all local plans must recognise both the threats to the countryside, as well as the role it can play in providing a myriad of services.

Fixing the broken housing system for rural communities

Fixing the housing system has the potential to regenerate rural communities at a time when it is desperately needed. That's why we want to see genuinely 'affordable' housing linked to local incomes, and more action to limit the loss of rural housing to second homes and holiday lets.

Enhancing the countryside next door

We must invest in the countryside as a key solution to the climate and nature crises, and an irreplaceable space where people across the nation can enjoy the great

outdoors. The next government needs to ensure that the Green Belt continues to be protected, and designate a new generation of regional and country parks – giving more people and nature space to thrive. We also want to see more farmland covered by Environmental Land Management Schemes, so that we can begin to restore biodiversity.

Rooftop renewables – a common sense revolution

To protect nature and our treasured landscapes, we have a duty to make the best possible use of our finite land. But our outdated and expensive energy system is using up more and more of the space we need for food, wellbeing, and wildlife across our countryside. Meanwhile, we are missing opportunities to generate huge amounts of cheap, low-carbon electricity on rooftops in every part of the country. With the right initiatives, the rooftops of warehouses and car parks across the nation could cut carbon emissions, slash energy bills and protect our countryside. That's why the next government should make rooftop solar a standard requirement for new buildings and commit to getting 60% of the solar energy we need from our rooftops.

Read the [full manifesto](#) to get the detail on how we think the next government can make this happen.

Letter opposing EPIC development

There are plans for US healthcare firm, EPIC, to build its European Headquarters on the Green Belt on the eastern edge of Long Ashton in North Somerset. The 90-acre development would support 2,000 jobs by 2040, but will be built over valuable Green Belt land. We have submitted a letter in opposition to the development which can be read [here](#).



The planned office development. Photo from Epic

Join in
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