



An Update from the Chair

As we celebrate CPRE's Centenary Year, it's an opportunity to reflect on what a movement of people who care about the countryside can achieve across one hundred years. Early CPRE campaigns established Green Belts around towns and cities, paved the way for areas of 'wild beauty' to be preserved in National Parks and halted unplanned development in the countryside.

Today our countryside faces threats from housing and solar development pressure and from climate change so there is still an important job to do in protecting it for future generations.

At CPRE Avon and Bristol we work, through our Hedgerow Heroes project, to make our countryside more resilient and aid nature's recovery and our planning volunteers support local communities to ensure their voices are heard in the planning process.

A highlight of this year for me was to engage with the young members of Bristol Youth Orchestra as we staged a very special event, a *'Concert for the Countryside'*. We saw first hand how members of the Orchestra care about the countryside and environment. They also met up with young people from Babbasa in Bristol to plant 100 trees to mark the Centenary.

CPRE Avon and Bristol will continue to encourage young people to join our movement and help shape the countryside of the future.

Thank you, Members, for your continued and valued support and I look forward to seeing you at our AGM on October 10th where you will be able to view some inspiring extracts from the Concert.

Sarah Pitt

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Centenary Celebrations and *'Concert for the Countryside'*



From left to right: Miranda Krestovnikoff, Natural History Presenter, Sarah Pitt, Chair CPRE Avon and Bristol, Jonathan Dimpleby, Chair of Bristol Beacon Board of Trustees, Debbie Wiseman OBE, Composer, Mary-Ann Ochota, President CPRE.

In March, CPRE Avon and Bristol staged an ambitious *'Concert for the Countryside'* at Bristol Beacon and brought together music, film and storytelling in a unique celebration of England's landscapes and rural heritage.

The audience was taken on a journey through the countryside from 1926 to 2026, with stunning archive film footage showcasing moors, wetlands, woodlands, coastlines and the communities whose lives have been shaped by them. The films, curated by David Parker and Bob Pitt of Available Light Productions, provided a powerful backdrop to a memorable evening of live orchestral music.



Performed by the 90-piece Bristol Youth Orchestra, the programme included music by Vaughan Williams, Coleridge-Taylor and Elgar, together with the world premiere of a specially commissioned work, *'Regenerate, Protect & Celebrate'*, by acclaimed composer Debbie Wiseman OBE, who conducted the piece herself. The concert celebrated not only the beauty of the countryside but also the challenges it faces and the positive action being taken to protect it.

What made the event particularly special was the involvement of so many young people. The orchestra's musicians embraced the project with enthusiasm, recognising the connection between culture, nature and community. Their participation extended beyond the concert hall: members of the orchestra, alongside young people from Babbasa in Bristol, helped plant 100 trees in a CPRE Avon and Bristol Centenary Woodland Grove, creating a lasting living legacy from the event.

The concert attracted new audiences to CPRE's work and demonstrated how creativity can inspire people to care about the future of the countryside. It was a fitting and uplifting way to celebrate our Centenary year and a reminder that protecting our landscapes is a cause that can unite generations.



Huge thanks to our Chair, Sarah Pitt, and Charity Coordinator Adaire Osbaldeston for all their hard work in making this event happen.



In addition to this and other local centenary events, you may have seen that CPRE's Centenary year received national recognition at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, where the CPRE show garden, *'On the Edge'*, won both a Gold Medal and the prestigious Garden of the Year award.

Designed by Sarah Eberle, the garden highlighted the often-overlooked countryside on the edges of our towns and cities, demonstrating how these landscapes can become places of beauty, biodiversity and wellbeing when given the protection and care they deserve. Following Chelsea, the garden will be relocated to Sheffield as a permanent community green space, leaving a lasting legacy beyond the show itself. The garden has helped bring our message about protecting the countryside to millions of people during our Centenary year.

(c) Mark Spencer @spencercollection

Hedgerow Heroes

In terms of positive action on the ground, nowhere is CPRE's spirit of optimism more evident than in our hugely successful and popular Hedgerow Heroes project. Hedgerows are often described as the stitching that holds together the patchwork of our countryside and are a distinctive feature of the English countryside. They provide homes for wildlife and act as corridors for countless species, increasing connectivity, capturing carbon, helping to reduce flooding and contributing enormously to the beauty of our landscapes.

This year has been the most ambitious and successful Hedgerow Heroes season yet. Across England, 13 CPRE branches have worked towards the national Centenary challenge of restoring and planting 100 miles of hedgerow.

Here in Avon and Bristol, our own Hedgerow Heroes programme continues to go from strength to strength. Since 2022, we have planted and rejuvenated more than 8 kilometres of hedgerow and remain on course to achieve our Centenary Challenge goal of 10 kilometres by the end of 2026.

We have also created a lasting legacy through the planting of a Centenary Woodland Grove at Great Avon Wood, near Pensford, south of Bristol.



During the latest season, our Hedgerow Heroes team, Sam Martlew and Gemma Michael, worked across eight sites and delivered 35 events involving 242 volunteers. Together they planted more than 10,800 hedge whips, delivered 21 planting days and trained over 100 people in the traditional skill of hedgelaying.

Partnerships have continued to grow, including work with Avon Needs Trees at the ambitious Lower Chew Forest project, alongside projects with local councils to improve biodiversity and restore valuable habitats.

What is particularly encouraging is the enthusiasm shown by volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. Participants consistently tell us how much they value the opportunity to contribute directly to nature recovery, learn new skills and spend time outdoors with like-minded people.



Planning and Development Issues

Planning and development issues remain at the heart of CPRE's work. Across our district groups we continue to monitor planning applications, respond to local plans and consultations and champion the protection of the Green Belt and valued local countryside. Our volunteers play a vital role in ensuring that the countryside has a strong voice in local decision-making.

All four local authorities are progressing their Local Plans, although there is continuing concern that sites with existing planning permission are not being built out quickly enough. At the same time, a number of speculative applications are being submitted on Green Belt and greenfield sites outside Local Plan allocations, particularly in rural areas.



One of the largest planning issues currently facing the area is Bristol Airport's proposal to expand passenger numbers to 15 million per year. The plans include runway-related infrastructure and the compulsory purchase of land at Felton Common. CPRE Avon & Bristol is following the consultation closely, alongside local communities and parish councils, to ensure that the environmental and countryside impacts are fully considered.

As always, we are grateful to the members and volunteers across our district groups who continue to scrutinise planning proposals, respond to consultations and champion the protection of our countryside. Their work remains essential in ensuring that local voices are heard and that decisions affecting our landscapes receive proper public scrutiny.



CPRE Avon and Bristol Annual General Meeting

Please make a note in your diary for our Annual General Meeting, which will take place on Saturday 10th October 2026, from 2pm to 5pm at The Belmont Estate, Watercress Farm, Wraxall. Belmont Estate is being re-wilded and we will hear more about the ongoing project on the day.

AGM Address

Belmont Estate
Watercress Farm
Bristol Road
Wraxall
BS28 1NE

The entrance to Watercress Farm is signposted, follow the drive down to the two barns with the stretched tent across. The driveway will lead you down to the car park, and the event barn is furthest from the car park.



Image credit: CPRE Hertfordshire

We are delighted that our guest speaker will be Peter Waine, former Chair of CPRE and co-author of *'22 Ideas that Saved the English Countryside'*. We look forward to welcoming members for what promises to be a fascinating afternoon. Notification of the event with details of how to register will be sent out to you in September.

As our Centenary Year continues, we have much to celebrate. The success of our *'Concert for the Countryside'*, the creation of the Woodland Grove and the achievements of Hedgerow Heroes in this area demonstrate what can be accomplished when people come together with a shared commitment to protecting and enhancing our countryside.



Centenary Woodland Grove and Hedgerow Appeal

To help build on this momentum, we have launched our Centenary Woodland Grove and Hedgerow Appeal. The appeal will support the long-term care of the Woodland Grove and enable us to continue expanding our Hedgerow Heroes programme across the West of England.

Every donation will help us restore and create more hedgerows, train volunteers in traditional countryside skills and bring more people into direct contact with nature. As we celebrate 100 years of CPRE, this appeal offers a practical way for members and supporters to help leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

**[Donate to CPRE
Avon and Bristol](#)**



Thank you for your continued support of CPRE Avon & Bristol.

With best wishes,
Sarah Pitt.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah C. Pitt".

Chair of CPRE Avon and Bristol.

