



The countryside charity
Cornwall

Cornwall Matters April 2023

CPRE Cornwall newsletter
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We are very pleased to say that our new website www.cprecornwall.org is now up and running. Do have a look – we welcome feedback from members and would be pleased to hear suggestions for anything it should include. It is greatly enhanced by some lovely photographs of the Cornish landscape by Rowena Castillo Nicholls but sadly, we have to report that Rowena has decided not to stand for the committee this year. We would like to express our thanks for all Rowena did for us, for her strong advocacy for all aspects of wildlife conservation and biodiversity as well as providing such beautiful photographs.

Our AGM was held on 25th February at Woodland Valley Farm and after the meeting Martin Howlett gave an excellent talk about the new Environmental Land Management (ELMS) schemes, outlining the choices farmers will have for improving their land and supporting biodiversity. Martin farms in east Cornwall and represents the Tamar Valley AONB. Then Chris Jones, the proprietor of Woodland Valley Farm, gave a short introduction about the farm's development over his and his father's lifetimes, before guiding a walk to his Beaver Project – see Diana Taylor's photographs below.

The AGM was attended by 41 members and guests, and the debate was lively throughout. Rowena Swallow repeated our pressing need for new members, explaining how much we would gain if every member were to recruit just one other person: the one+one idea. So please, if you possibly can, talk to family, friends and even acquaintances and suggest they join us. Some new publicity material is in preparation to help spread the word.



And a big THANK YOU for your support – we very much appreciate the ongoing commitment of our members as we seek to protect rural Cornwall and support sustainable development to meet local needs.



Natural England and the Penwith Moors Stephen Horscroft

Members may recall that CPRE Cornwall has objected to Natural England proposals for SSSI status on the Penwith Moors as they stand. The economic impact on the agri-food sector of the proposals is neither analysed nor understood in the consultation. While CPRE Cornwall welcomes the principle of the designation (for example, with the threat of encroaching development from the towns) the idea that this is just a 'scientific' consultation that should be confined to the decision-making process of Natural England fails to recognise the broader implications for a sector already under pressure.

West Penwith has been farmed in the sense that we would recognise today for around 4000 years. Farmers have shaped and delivered a stunning landscape and continue to manage it for the benefit of locals and visitors: not just in terms of its wellbeing benefits but also as a source of food and income for the people who live and work there.

If the designation is pushed through on its current basis the consequence would be the need to adapt farm processes and purchases, with more pressure on farmers and supply chains when margins are already tight, and likely sales or land left fallow. Every time a farmer wants to plough or have visible storage of their land, they would require permission from Natural England. This would require paperwork. Time is money.

The solution is a rounded approach to these issues. To support farmers over long periods to enable sustainable businesses: we need locally sourced food and Cornwall is in a great position to supply it. There are also a number of organisations that could supply such support if the funding and joined-up thinking to do it were enabled.

The Natural England Board is sitting on May 10th to deliberate on the responses. The problem will be that they may exclude 'non scientific' responses – which would be ridiculous as these issues cannot be addressed in isolation. The other issue is that the sitting is due to be in a Plymouth hotel (with all the associated costs) whereas a hall in west Cornwall could be hired more cheaply and of course be directly accessible to the busy and worried farmers of the area.

South West in Bloom



Photo: Royal Horticultural Society

Do you have some keen gardeners in your town or village? Are you fighting for the environment by cultivating trees and plants? For this year's South West regional section of the ever-popular RHS 'Britain in Bloom' competition, the CPRE South West is sponsoring a special Environmental Award. For details about how to enter see www.southwestinbloom.org.uk. Entries close on 14 April

Communities across Britain combine in horticultural skill, enthusiasm, and fun to improve and regenerate their local environments through imaginative planting of trees, shrubs, and landscaping as well as conservation and recycling projects to sweep away the eyesores that blight our streets like litter, graffiti and vandalism. In recent years, the village of Haselbury Plucknett in South Somerset has been outstandingly successful. Hugh Williams, Chair of CPRE Somerset writes: 'People often ask how we continue to be so successful for a small village – after the first year we had a very good coach from the

RHS Southwest team, we read the guidelines carefully and applied them. The key to it is to involve as many people and organisations in the village as possible.'

South West Water
Richard Cogar



Members who attended the AGM in February may remember my remarks about the continuing transgressions of South West Water (SWW). Last autumn, I wrote to Susan Davey, the CEO of Pennon Group, the parent company of SWW, raising a number of concerns, some of which are summarised below.

I referred her to the Vision and Purpose of the Pennon Group: “Bringing Water to Life”, which includes “enhancing the environment; delivering for colleagues, customers and communities; delivering safe, clean drinking water and operating a responsible and sustainable approach to business”. I pointed out that, following the publication of the Vision, the Environmental Protection Agency Report for 2021 rated SWW across various metrics as “poor performing ... below average” or “requiring improvement”. For sewage pollution incidents, they were rated Category Red, the worst possible. For self-reporting of all pollution incidents, SWW’s performance was worse than the sector average. I also asked about the many faulty or missing Event Duration Monitors, which record volumes of rainwater and sewage that are discharged into local rivers. Ms Davey did not personally reply to my letter, passing it instead to Luke Carpenter, her Executive Customer Liaison Manager. He replied that the majority of these monitors had been installed by last October, with the remainder to be installed by the end of

2023. He also pointed out that a dedicated engineering team was being recruited (presumably to service these monitors).

I have written to Mr Carpenter, asking how many monitors have been installed to date and whether the maintenance team was now in place. I reminded him that, even when these monitors are in place, they would only record the volumes of rainwater run-off and sewage that exceed the capacity of the drainage system; they would not prevent the continuing pollution of our rivers, which has been the subject of much media and public outrage.

Furthermore, there appeared to be no means of recording pollution caused by agricultural discharges of slurry, pesticides, fertilisers; road run-off consisting of a cocktail of heavy metals, brake fluid and de-icing agent; chemical pollution from paracetamol, antihistamines and caffeine and, of course, the menace of micro plastics. At present, the monitoring of all these pollutants seemed to be undertaken by a small number of amateur "citizen scientists".

Apart from this, according to "Surfers Against Sewage", there were 21 "dry spills" - discharges of sewage - between October 2021 and September 2022, recorded at locations where there had been no rainfall for the preceding two days. What was the justification for this?

The Environment Agency had reported that only 14% of English rivers currently have "good" ecological status, with that classification dropping to only 6% by 2027 on current trends. This assessment may well be optimistic, given the way the Agency has had its resources cut by government in recent years. The situation was now so bad that two national newspapers - the Times and the i - had launched campaigns calling for Britain's rivers to be cleaned up.

In February 2021, South West Water publicised its participation in the "Green Recovery Programme". According to this, £1bn, later increased by £92m, would be spent by 2025 on "environmental improvement". At that time, Ms Davey, Pennon's CEO, confidently stated that, "Our Green Recovery proposals are focused on opportunities to make an even bigger environmental and societal contribution to the South West for the longer term than we do already." She continued, "We are proposing no increase to customers' bills over that period."

Since then, the EPA Data Report had recorded a deterioration in South West Water's environmental performance from two stars to one star, the worst grading possible. As for a "societal contribution", customers had now been informed that their bills were to rise by 7.5%.

I have invited Mr Carpenter to respond to all of these points. I also reminded him that, quoted in the Times on 13 February this year, Ms Davey called South West Water's environmental performance for 2021 "deeply disappointing". Given that her most recent published remuneration amounted to £1.6m and that bonuses reportedly formed a substantial part of this remuneration, I have also asked Mr Carpenter on what basis these bonuses were awarded, bearing in mind SWW's environmental performance.



Photo credit: Duncan Scobie

The Dark Skies Project

Jane Michell

In West Penwith there seems to be ever increasing light pollution from new development, farmers who light their forecourts, and private individuals who also do the same: furthermore, the LED lights now in use are very bright. "It seems as if generally people are not aware of the value of dark skies or the harm that lighting our countryside does to wildlife." (personal comment from CPRE member)

The West Penwith Dark Sky Designation was granted in December 2021. It is part of the Bodmin and West Cornwall AONB. To keep the Designation they have to organise regular education and outreach events and activities and so, to that end, they have produced a leaflet explaining about good and bad lighting (up lighting and down lighting) They have also encouraged people to take part in the CPRE Annual Star Count.

There is a Steering Group consisting of a partnership of interested people and organisations, but it has shrunk a little so they are keen for CPRE Cornwall to be engaged. The Steering Group does not actively comment on individual planning applications but Cornwall Council & St Just

Neighbourhood Plan includes Dark Skies Policies that are applied to the making of planning decisions.

Sue James from the Dark Skies Initiative says: “Within West Cornwall, I'm not aware of significant increases in street lights, if any, and coming soon will be street lights we can request to be turned off or dimmed between midnight & 5 a.m. In a general sense, we do run events to raise awareness of the benefits of Dark Skies and reducing Light Pollution.”

She adds that she hopes that CPRE Cornwall and its members would be willing to get involved and help them so please, would anyone who is interested in getting actively involved contact Sue on: clrsuejames@gmail.com

Planning Update



Photo: Cornwall Council

Recent Decisions

Gwithian Towans, Hayle

Single holiday home in AONB

Planning application PA22/10476

REFUSED

Rame Head

Prior approval notification – Agricultural building

Planning application PA23/00924

REFUSED

The Chalet, Boat Cove Lane, Perranuthnoe

Demolition and replacement of existing chalet

Planning application PA22/10767

WITHDRAWN

Land North West Of Polscoe, Fowey

Convenience retail store, access, parking

Planning application PA21/06771

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

Hospital Cross Helston

Retail/food outlets, access, parking, yard.

Planning applications PA21/07481

REFUSED

West Cornwall Golf Club, Lelant

Club house, 30 bed hotel, spa, 50 bed aparthotel,

Planning application PA22/01752 PREAPP

DECIDED

The Queens Arms Inn, Breage

2 dwellings, new vehicular accesses

Planning application PA21/12480

APPROVED

Objections lodged with Cornwall Council - Awaiting Decision

Headland Hotel Headland Road Newquay

Installation of photovoltaic panels & LBC

Planning applications PA22/11258, PA22/11259

Trewidden Road St Ives

Erection of a Premier Inn hotel

Planning application PA22/11311

Meudon Hotel, Maenporth Falmouth

10 holiday units, swimming pool, restaurant, gym

Planning application PA22/11402

Land Adjacent to Higher Lane, Mawgan, Helston

Residential development for up to 20 houses

Planning application PA22/07887

Trewiston Farm Caravan Park, St Minver

Additional 36 plots, installation of caravans

Planning application PA22/05179

Prow Park Business Village, Newquay

Change of use of land for parking and containers

Planning application PA22/05334

Land North Of Tredavoe, Newlyn Penzance

Agricultural access track, 2 bay extension

Planning application PA22/05468

Carbis Beach Apartments, Carbis Bay

Six new Aparthotel apartments

Planning application PA22/04841

Barn Hill, Cadgwith, Ruan Minor, Helston

Construction of a detached dwelling

Planning application PA21/12133

Trefresa Farm Rock Wadebridge

Hotel, restaurant, cinema, spa, 9 huts,13 lodges

Planning application PA20/10041

East of Wellington Place, Carnon Downs

5 dwellings and site access

Appeal reference APP/3295228

Leans Field, Trevarrian, Newquay

Change of use of land for Drive-in Cinema

Appeal reference APP/3295146

Perran springs touring Park, Goonhavern

Static caravan bases, 2 conversions,1 extension

Planning application PA22/03090

Penhale Camp, Camp road, Holywell Bay

Holiday accommodation and leisure facilities.

Planning application PA22/02896

Penhale Camp, Camp road, Holywell Bay

9 new dwellings 3 refurbished dwellings

Planning application PA22/02794

Gorran Churchtown

17 dwellings, access, parking, open space.

Planning application PA22/02389

Hotel Bristol, Narrowcliff, Newquay

180 apartments, 44 bed aparthotel, retail units

Planning application PA22/10572

Trelissick Gardens, Feock

New 250 space carpark, crossing, access

Planning application PA22/10184
