



The countryside charity
Cornwall

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CPRE Cornwall newsletter

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CPRE Cornwall AGM, Trebah Garden

Our AGM was held on 14 May at Trebah Garden near Mawnan Smith. Those members who attended enjoyed a lovely sunny day and a spectacular view down over the lush valley of this beautiful garden.

Committee member Richard Cogar introduced the meeting and our Chair Rowena Swallow reviewed our year and stressed yet again, how urgently we need more members and donations to support our work. Those committee members who had agreed to stand again were voted in, and we were delighted to welcome two new members onto the Committee: Jenny Cruse and Andrew Climo. After the business of the AGM, our Patron, Merlin Hanbury-Tenison, gave a fascinating and inspiring talk based upon his book *Our Oaken Bones* about the temperate rainforest on his farm on the edge of Bodmin Moor. His project is to protect, conserve and research this extraordinary national treasure.

There are many serious issues about water: supply, quality, the threat from Climate Change, to name but three, all currently under debate. One piece of good news is that in the future, all fines paid by water companies will be used to deal with the damage their negligence has caused. For this issue, Richard Cogar brings a breath of fresh air by bringing Māori philosophy to bear. His essay has a serious point, delightfully made.

We also have a brief report on a recent virtual 'Town Hall' meeting organised by national office in which many members and volunteers took part. Discussions covered the issues raised by the government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill and our campaign for rooftop solar.

That slippery word 'affordable' in reference to new builds in Cornwall needs to be pinned down to Cornish levels of pay. One key answer is the provision of what's called 'social housing' for genuinely affordable rents. Go to BBC Sounds to find the recent episode of BBC Radio 4's excellent 'Rethinking' series that deals with Social Housing: it provides a useful briefing.

Lastly, Cornwall Climate Care's latest film takes a thorough look at the invidious misinformation that weighs so heavily to distort the Climate Change debate. It is uncomfortable viewing, but well worth watching.

[#ClimateScam? a Cornwall Climate Care documentary](#)

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With great sadness, we report the death in April this year of our most exceptional friend and supporter, **William Corbett**. William devoted his time and expertise to CPRE Cornwall over many years, training our Administrator, Paula Johnston, to ensure that his knowledge would live on and enable us to continue our fight against inappropriate development.

William settled in Cornwall in the early 1970s, turning himself from an insurance executive into a farmer. He was a long-standing Parish Councillor and past Chair of St Mawgan in Pydar Parish Council, as well as a Restormel Borough Councillor, prior to the establishment of the Cornwall unitary authority. His knowledge of local and national planning policy was extensive and he was meticulous in applying it to planning applications that threatened the countryside he loved. All of Cornwall owes him a debt for his rigorous defence of our landscape and we of CPRE Cornwall are especially grateful for his staunch support of our work.

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♥ AND A BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT ♥



Milford Sound. New Zealand

Toitu te marae o Tane, toitu te marae o Tangaroa, toitu te iwi
“When land and water are sustained, the people will prosper”

Richard Cogar

Tina and I recently blew a substantial hole in our pension savings by spending most of April touring New Zealand’s North and South Islands. Near the end of our stay, I noticed the above sign, located near a spectacular piece of coastline, which thankfully included an English translation. I decided to photograph it.

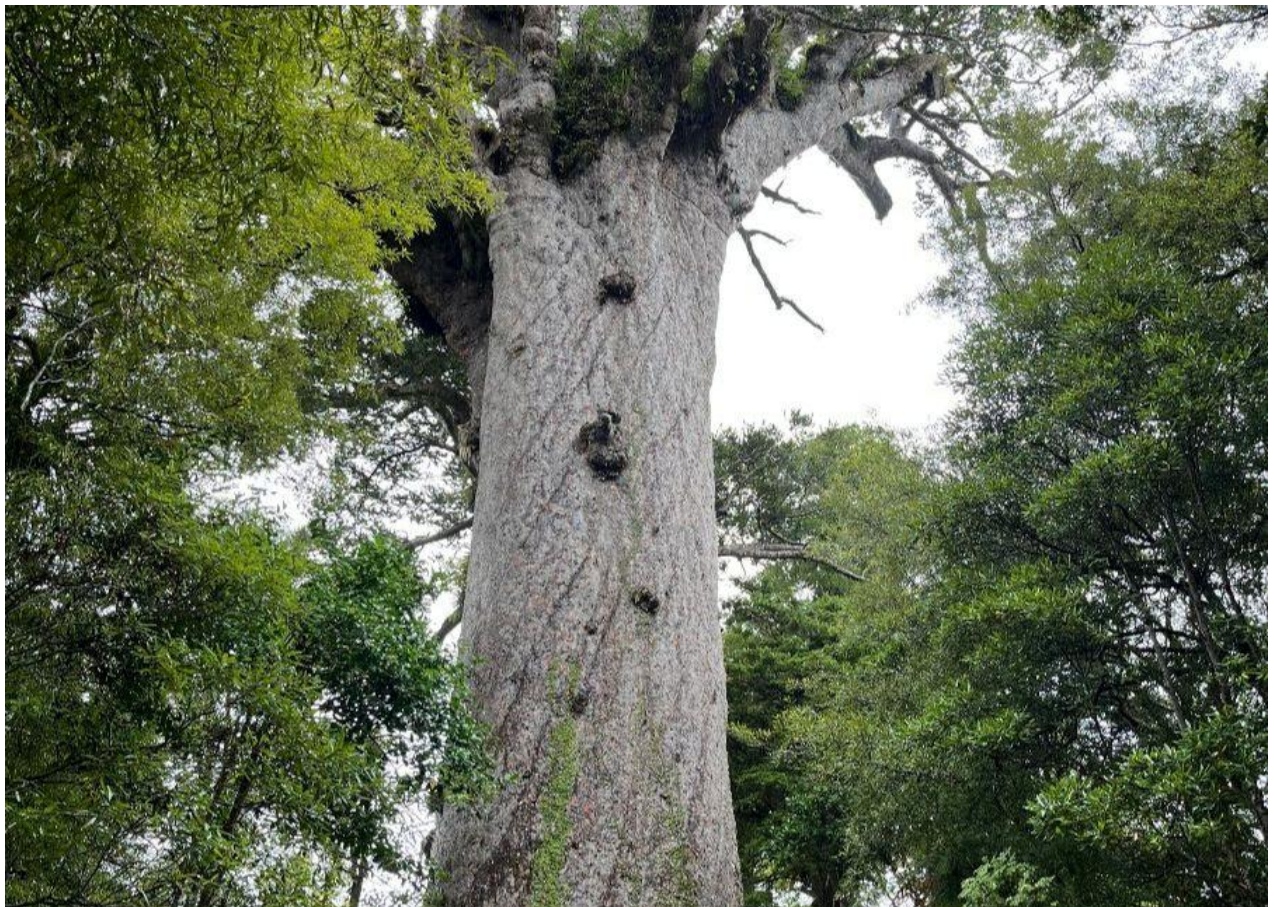
Three weeks earlier, and wiped out by jet lag, we had staggered into immigration at Auckland and a series of encounters with officials, each giving us a progressively more strident warning that we were not to enter New Zealand carrying **any** animal or vegetable substance, no matter how seemingly innocuous. Before being allowed out of the airport, we were then required to walk along a passage for the final encounter, this time with two rather stern uniformed dog handlers with an inquisitive sniffer dog, who gave our luggage the once-over. A positive identification of anything prohibited, even that airline snack that you forgot to eat at 37,000 feet and stuffed into your hand luggage, and you’re relieved of \$NZ400. They take their biosecurity **very** seriously.

This, of course, is because of their wonderful and unique flora and fauna, a product of New Zealand’s historical isolation. For example, there are no indigenous mammals. Unfortunately, they now have plenty of mammals; most are predators. Firstly, rats brought over by the Māori centuries ago and then by us Europeans in the holds of trading ships. The invasions continued with the introduction of, amongst others, stoats, weasels and even our beloved hedgehogs. The Australians introduced the possum. All these kill the native wildlife, which, in many cases, is in serious decline, including the iconic kiwi.



The Kiwi lost the ability to fly because there were no indigenous mammalian predators in New Zealand. Since the inadvertent or deliberate introduction of a range of predators, numbers have been decimated in the wild. There are now strenuous efforts to protect those that remain.

It doesn't end there. At one time, approximately 80% of New Zealand was forested, including the wonderful Kauri tree, revered by the Māori. A mature Kauri tree can live for thousands of years and rivals, for visual impact, any North American Sequoia. The Kauri wood was extensively exploited by Europeans, with the result that very few remain. Those that do are highly protected in their National Parks, with access being restricted by visitors having to paddle beforehand in a chemical bath. Needless to say, no healthy Kauri trees are being cut down today. New Zealand has a population of little more than five million, living in a slightly larger land area than Britain's. It is, therefore, overwhelmingly rural and has none of our British development pressures. However, New Zealanders' concern for preserving and restoring their natural environment does seem to be more highly developed than ours.



New Zealand Kauri tree on the North Island. Kauri trees can live up to 2,000 years, but most have fallen victim to European loggers. The few that remain are fiercely protected.

To many of us Brits, living in one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe, the over-exploitation of the natural environment and the harm caused by the accidental or thoughtless introduction of alien plants and animals sounds depressingly familiar.

There is a difference, however. The New Zealand Department of Conservation runs a programme called "Predator Free 2050", funded by the Government, charitable foundations and the public. It is a hugely ambitious effort to eradicate or suppress mammalian predators in large areas and completely eradicate them from island nature reserves by that date. In practice, that means public education, laying traps throughout their national parks and paying bounties for possum carcasses. Even feral cats are targeted. "Predator Free 2050" may not achieve all of its stated aims, but the ambition is both impressive and laudable.

Over 16% of New Zealand's population is of Māori descent, with a further 9% having South Seas roots. The Māori influence is still strong; the language has official status and it survives in many place names. Māori community meeting halls are found in rural areas and facial tattoos can still be seen occasionally on both men and women.

Our (part Māori) guide had told us about Papatuanuku, the Earth Mother, who represents the land and all life. She and Ranginui, the Sky Father, were locked in a tight embrace until they were separated by a son, Tane Mahuta, who allowed light into the world and is the god of the forests, and protector of all life. This does seem to be a mythology that celebrates the natural world and the interdependency of all living things.



Māori at the Treaty House, where the Treaty of Waitangi between Britain and the Māori people was signed in 1840. It was ostensibly to protect Māori interests.

How much this world view has been influential in New Zealand remains open to much debate; Auckland suffers from congestion and urban sprawl in much the same way as many Westernised cities, and their highly efficient agriculture and viticulture have evolved to satisfy European, North American and increasingly, Asian markets.

New Zealand did not suffer from the Covid pandemic to anything like the extent that Britain did, helped by its isolation and perhaps by different public policies. In Britain, news coverage at the time was dominated by reports of the daily death tolls and the shortage of PPE. There was also a scramble to escape our crowded cities and buy rural properties, to relocate to a supposedly safer environment where a lucky few people could work from home. We would be nicer to our neighbours.

There would be reduced travel and correspondingly reduced pressure on infrastructure. Crucially, this was also accompanied by a sentiment that green spaces were healthier and better for our physical and mental health by reconnecting us with the natural world and its rhythms and re-establishing our place within it. Dog ownership expanded as so many people thought it exciting to acquire an animal companion. Had even Tane Mahuta been discovered at Dover in the back of a container lorry, he might well have been welcomed. In short: Nirvana.

How much has changed in only five years. Covid has gone, or more accurately, disappeared from the national consciousness. Office workers are being pressurised by their bosses to return ("it's more productive"). Animal charities are bursting at the seams with relinquished pets requiring rehoming, as their former owners make the surprising discovery that dogs are complex creatures that need training, daily contact and exercise. Urban house prices have resumed their traditional upward trajectory. Above all, we are all to repair some of the damage done by Covid by "growing the economy".

Growing the economy will provide us with all the goods and services that our consumer economy deems essential. We have made a start; we are currently the fastest-growing economy in the G7, we are told. At the same time, Britain has been ranked only 23rd in a recent international "happiness survey". We must cut taxes for economic growth, ignoring the fact that some Scandinavian citizens are simultaneously the most heavily taxed and the happiest. We are told that house prices are unaffordable for many people and we must build more; our current Government will helpfully facilitate this by overriding any local concerns that some developments might be inappropriate for local need and might not lead to the economic growth envisaged.

Most depressingly, our transient concern for the environment seems to have disappeared again, having been eviscerated by the incessant demands to "grow the economy". Our Chancellor reassured developers recently that they "need not worry about bats and newts". Further relaxations of environmental safeguards are planned. The deputy head of a fast-rising rival party has called efforts to reach net zero by 2050 "net stupid zero", and that we should extend North Sea oil drilling, ignoring the fact that much fossil fuel is refined overseas, therefore with little effect on energy security or prices.

If the date of 2050 seems familiar, it is the same date proposed by New Zealand for the eradication of introduced predators in parts of that country. New Zealand has “Predator Free 2050”. We have “net stupid zero 2050”. They have an indigenous people whose beliefs and culture positioned themselves as humans as an integral part of a natural hierarchy. We seem to be elevating ourselves ever more firmly with dominion over the natural world.

We are in danger of becoming indoctrinated by politicians telling us that we cannot afford to adopt many measures to safeguard the environment and who, at the same time, decline to provide us with any information about the ever-increasing economic costs of infrastructure repair, flood damage, insurance claims and lost productive activity every time there is a severe climate-change induced weather event. (My neighbour is a farmer who recently lost an entire field of barley in the prolonged dry spell.) It seems that reducing environmental concern coincides with increasing environmental contempt and disinformation. When Plymouth City Council needlessly destroyed nearly 100 mature and healthy trees during the dead of night, they explained away their environmental vandalism by stating that some saplings would be planted elsewhere, as part of a redevelopment plan. They omitted to mention that it takes up to ten years for trees to reach maximum effectiveness in absorbing carbon. All this during a climate emergency. After the moronic felling of the Sycamore Gap tree, the ensuing outrage and the conviction of the culprits, there have even been a few public suggestions that they be sentenced to community orders, thereby avoiding custody. By contrast, the Dartford Bridge climate activists, who breached an injunction and held up the traffic for a few hours, were sentenced to custodial terms of four and five years, reduced only slightly on appeal.

What on earth has happened to “the healing power of nature” that Merlin Hanbury-Tennison so movingly described during Cornwall CPRE’s AGM? Is it purely coincidental that what appears to be an epidemic of declining mental health is happening at the same time as our increasing disconnection from the natural world? Perhaps we shall know after a few years, when AI is firmly embedded in our lives. Mark Boyle describes in his book *The Way Home* how he set out on a business career, armed with a first class honours degree in marketing. He then gave it all up, switching off his electronic devices and discarding all the paraphernalia of contemporary urban life, before moving to a smallholding on the west coast of Ireland and living a life that the Amish would find sophisticated. He grew or caught his own food, went to bed when the light faded and got up when it returned. He expected to find it confining; instead, he found it liberating.

I'm certainly not advocating that we all emulate 19th century agrarian workers: I'm currently hacking back a very large lawn that has run rampant after a "no-mow May". After 90 minutes of toil and armed with enough destructive technology to fight a small war, I'm only halfway through. I know that I'm writing this on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, but I wouldn't like to cut the lawn with a scythe!

Elsewhere, according to the Guardian, the indigenous Innu people of Quebec succeeded in having their local Magpie River granted legal status by local authorities. The rights granted included the right to flow and the right to be free of pollution. One of the Innu commented that spending time on the River was a form of healing for indigenous people. Are you reading this, South West Water?

There is some hope, then, but we should not have to turn to the examples set by indigenous peoples to conceive a more symbiotic relationship with the natural world. If so many people continue to view the natural world as merely a place for humans to relax and take the dog for a walk, rather than as a complex interdependent system of life on which we all depend, then our problems will only increase. Seeing that our economy shrank by all of 0.3% in April may be the least of our problems.

"When land and water are sustained, the people will prosper". We shall see.



CPRE President Mary-Ann Ochota

Amplifying Rural Voices

Highlights from CPRE's First National (and virtual) 'Town Hall'

Smarth "Sammy" Sharma

Assistant Planning Volunteer, CPRE Cornwall

On 3 June 2025, CPRE held its first-ever national virtual 'Town Hall' - an important step toward fostering a stronger sense of community among its wide network of staff, volunteers, and supporters across the country. It was hosted by CPRE President Mary-Ann Ochota, who opened the session by underlining the importance of connection and collective action, especially in a dispersed organisation like CPRE.

Mary-Ann reminded us that, despite working in scattered parishes, counties, and campaigns, we are united by a common concern: how to protect, enhance, and secure the future of the English countryside. This meeting was a chance to listen, reflect, and chart the way forward, particularly on two major fronts: the **Planning & Infrastructure Bill** and **Rooftop Solar** policy.

Firstly, Mary-Ann took time to celebrate CPRE's volunteer base - more than 2,300 strong and the backbone of the organisation. From planting hedgerows to lobbying councils, CPRE volunteers are on the front lines of rural advocacy. Besides the usual processes for planning applications, new roles have been introduced to meet the demands of the times, including brownfield mapping, climate change research and an expanded digital activism platform. These initiatives reflect a renewed commitment to inclusive participation, particularly among our younger and more tech-savvy volunteers.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill: A Turning Point for Local Democracy.

The first main policy segment was led by Paul Miner (Head of Planning and Policy), supported by Rosella Cottam and Lewis Townsend. Their overview of this crucial Bill was both urgent and clear: while the bill contains promising elements, it poses serious risks to local democratic involvement in planning decisions.

Paul expressed CPRE's concern about the proposed scheme for how decisions will be delegated, a scheme that would limit which planning applications can be brought before local elected planning committees. This shift risks bypassing the vital platform that allows community voices to be heard, a principle that has been central to CPRE's mission for decades. Decisions made behind closed doors by officers, rather than in a public forum, could significantly weaken community trust and accountability in the planning system.

CPRE is actively engaging with more than fifty MPs from across party lines, particularly those representing rural constituencies, to push for amendments to the bill that would

produce a planning system that prioritises transparency, participation, and place-sensitive development. CPRE is working with the Town and Country Planning Association and other stakeholders in rural affairs to produce joint briefings that re-frame planning as a tool for democratic empowerment rather than as a delegated bureaucratic process.

Lewis Townsend stressed CPRE's belief in a broader, more ecological definition of planning, one that integrates housing with agriculture, flood resilience, biodiversity, and land use. He spoke about CPRE's **Vision for Planning** initiative, which aims to show how planning reform can deliver not only more homes, but better ones — ones that are affordable, well-located, and climate-resilient.

Key Messages from the Planning Segment:

Local voices matter: CPRE is pushing back against top-down delegation that risks marginalising local input.

Affordable must mean affordable: The current definition (up to 80% of market rate) fails to reflect real incomes, particularly in rural areas.

Grey Belt alert: proposed new policy could weaken traditional Green Belt protections: CPRE is monitoring this closely.

Neighbourhood Plans must be defended: There's a growing concern that these Plans are being undermined. CPRE intends to keep them at the heart of local control.

A Smarter Solar Strategy: Rooftops, Not Fields

CPRE's campaign for rooftop solar advocates a positive, practical alternative to the proliferation of large-scale solar farms on prime agricultural land. The message was grounded in research: Britain has the potential to generate over 117 gigawatts of solar energy through existing rooftops and car parks - more than double the government's 2030 target.

Instead of allowing vast tracts of farmland to be covered in solar arrays, threatening biodiversity, food production and scenic value, CPRE is advocating a smarter alternative:

Mandatory rooftop solar on all new homes and large car parks by 2027 (and the latest news is that the government has committed to this for new homes – a great success for CPRE).

Retrofitting public & commercial buildings to make better use of their roof space.

Any ground level solar only in the right places: prioritising brownfield and urban sites rather than food-producing farmland, especially as 60% of such land is already flood-risked.

This campaign aligns well with CPRE's broader push for a **Strategic Land Use Framework** — one that respects the needs of people, nature, and the climate (see future issues of *Cornwall Matters* on this initiative).

Looking Forward: Countryside, Community, & Climate Action

CPRE Chief Executive Roger Mortlock closed the event with a forward-looking vision for the organisation. He spoke passionately about engaging young people, not just as volunteers but as decision-makers, and he reaffirmed CPRE's commitment to climate activism. He encouraged participation in the upcoming Climate Coalition rally in July, underscoring CPRE's place in the broader environmental movement.

This 'Town Hall' was an energising reminder of CPRE's unique position: a bridge between grassroots activism and national policy, between deep local knowledge and long-term strategic thinking. We are showing how countryside protection can go hand in hand with progress. It was heartening to hear staff and volunteers reaffirm their commitment to democratic planning, sustainable land use and community empowerment - and to know that our voice is being effectively organised and amplified.

Planning



Artist's impression of the proposed Premier Inn, St Ives. Source: Whitbread

Despite Cornwall Council's refusal of the planning application for a new Premier Inn in April 2024, St Ives Town Council's unanimous opposition, over 600 members of the public submitting objections and an extremely strong campaign group, a Planning Inspector has decided that the controversial 90-room hotel overlooking St Ives can now be built. The original planning application was refused on the grounds of harm to the area's character and appearance. However, Planning Inspector Sylvia Leonard has now approved the proposal, stating that it "would not appear as unduly visually prominent or discordant within the hillside setting of the town and would not harm the setting of the conservation area". Key points in Inspector Leonard's deliberations include:

- There was a viable 'fallback position' for the site that could be enacted if permission for the hotel was not granted – there is an extant position from 2016 for an 'aparthotel' on the site.
- The existing care home did not make a positive contribution to the streetscape.
- The changing levels and landscape meant that a building of that size and scale would not be "unduly harmful" to the immediate townscape.
- Its location is a gateway site for visitors to the town.
- The mass of the building would be broken up by design elements and the design would result in townscape improvements.
- Views of the hotel would not be materially harmful when viewed from the pier and the harbour because of existing built up development.
- The Highway Authority has raised no objections to the appeal scheme.
- The magnitude of objections is not a determining factor in determining an appeal.

Other arguments, including impacts on traffic and parking, and a lack of need for additional hotel provision, were not supported.

The campaign group, Against Premier Inn, St Ives, continues to oppose this development and has written to the Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, making a comprehensive and compelling case. On Wednesday, 25 June, representatives from the group visited Westminster and met with one of Angela Rayner's parliamentary private secretaries, handing over the case file and emphasising the key points of the case. We await the response with interest.

Recent Decisions

APP/3354275 (PA22/11311) Trewidden Road, St Ives Construction of a Premier Inn ALLOWED	APP/3349687 (PA24/00716) St Hilary Permission in Principle, 9 dwellings DISMISSED
APP/3353953 (PA24/02315) Meadow Farm Rezare Outline planning, 1 dwelling. ALLOWED	

Objections Awaiting Decision

<p>Lost Gardens of Heligan Car park and crossing Planning application PA/25/02624</p>	<p>Tyringham Place, Lelant Development of 50 dwellings Planning application PA25/01847</p>
<p>Shute Hill, Breage Residential development Planning application PA23/09456</p>	<p>Castle Horneck, Penzance Development of 140 dwellings Planning application PA25/00085</p>
<p>Penhale Camp, Camp Road, Holywell Bay 9 new and three refurbished dwellings Planning application PA22/02794</p>	<p>Cold Northcott Wind Farm Repowering & extension of wind farm Planning application PA23/02727</p>
<p>Pandarosa Farm, Bodmin Development of 58 Dwellings Planning application PA23/07573</p>	<p>Halgavor Moor Development of up to 540 dwellings. Planning application PA20/10618</p>

Appeals to the Planning Inspectorate - Awaiting Decision

<p>APP/3352891 (PA23/05034) Land South Of Pengelly, Bosavern Construction of a pond.</p>	<p>APP/3353157 (PA22/10184) Trelissick Gardens 225 space car park</p>
<p>APP/ 3359104 (PA24/04886) Boat Cove Lane, Perranuthnoe. Construction of a chalet</p>	<p>APP/3352494 (PA23/02502) Gillyflower Golf Club Clubhouse, 19 holiday lodges</p>