



The countryside charity  
Cornwall

## Cornwall **Matters** April 2024



### **CPRE Cornwall newsletter issue**

10, April 2024

Our AGM was held on March 9<sup>th</sup> at Healey's Cyder Farm – and of course, it rained all day! Nevertheless, it was very good for the Committee to be able to meet some of our members face-to-face and to hear what they had to say; we are very grateful indeed to those who took the trouble to come.

Your Committee, who had all agreed to stand again, were duly voted in and we welcomed John Killick from Mylor: the only new Committee member. At Any Other Business we had an up-date on the long saga of the Halgavor Moor planning application near Bodmin – still unresolved and still strongly opposed by local people, Bodmin Town Council and the North Cornwall MP, Scott Mann. The appeal is currently on hold for at least a year while a water condition report is produced. CPRE Cornwall has objected and will continue to support local protesters to help save this beautiful, biodiverse and vulnerable wetland landscape.

We were delighted to welcome Roger Mortlock, CEO of CPRE national office, who gave a talk and answered questions from the floor. He lives in the Cotswolds but tells us he comes to Cornwall several times every year. He reminded us that 2026 is CPRE's centenary year and plans are being laid for this special milestone. He underlined that CPRE's special character is that while working alongside many other specialist pressure groups it manages to be 'small but mighty', weaving together all the different 'land use' issues and speaking with a powerful and well respected voice. Its close links to the grass roots issues of the countryside give it a unique overview.

Ahead of the General Election CPRE will target candidates in twenty mostly rural seats including St Ives and Truro & Falmouth here in Cornwall. Main concerns will be planning – specifically improving and tightening up the new Local Plans (supposed to be in preparation for 2025), sewage & water quality issues, the question of the definition of 'affordable' and Rooftop Renewables. CPRE is part of a 'Better Planning Coalition' to get the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) improved, including the wording on cases where land is being 'sat upon' unbuilt by developers.

Roger said it is critical to get the definition of 'affordable' right, related to local incomes and not to the price of the more expensive houses in the scheme. CPRE is working with the National Grid on the infrastructure issues that are holding up renewable energy schemes; a great deal more capacity is required. The national standard should be rooftop solar panels on new homes and on new commercial and industrial buildings. The technology is developing fast to deliver cheaper, lighter and easier-to-install systems. He went on to say that CPRE will work to establish common principles for energy generation to meet the net zero target and to give strong support to small scale local community energy schemes.

He said that for the centenary CPRE will be working hard on a 'Land Use Framework' to illustrate the key areas and how they interlock. He stressed that CPRE aims for

countryside solutions – not negativity but practicality: we recognise that the countryside is going to change and we need to engage with the activists of the future as they face the key issues for the countryside.

This issue presents two perspectives on the crucial issues for farming: an excellent up-date on the complicated story of farm payments schemes by Martin Howlett, an expert in the grass roots issues, and a strong statement of the essential questions about land use by the campaigning film-maker and activist Claire Wallerstein of Cornwall Climate Care. We very much appreciate their expertise and their generosity in writing for us.

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

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## **Sustainable farming and making a space for nature Martin Howlett**

Midway through DEFRA's Transition from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to our own UK Domestic Agricultural Policy (DAP) – a 50% reduction in Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) in 2024, together with several revisions of the much heralded green Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs): 'Public funds for Public goods' - our Cornish Farmers finally have some clarity and an appropriate funding allocation promised for the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), all in the hope of a target 80% sign up of land managers to some form of Environmental Stewardship (ES). And now with one welcome confirmation in the recent Budget, that all related schemes will qualify for 100% Agricultural Property Tax Relief (APR).

So despite various iterations of the Countryside Stewardship Schemes being around since the 1990's, each having had positive impact on nature recovery with up to 60% of all farmland participating at its height, the Rural Payment Agency's restrictive mantra of 'income foregone' and the red tape associated with it that has discouraged many over the years despite the schemes working in tandem with Basic Payment Scheme support across all acres. However, now faced with the stark reality of transitional removal of area support payments to 0% by 2027, agricultural businesses are forced to make the choice to 'go it alone' and find a fair return from the market place, or part-substitute income from the Environmental Schemes ('public goods') and in time possible Green Finance investment from carbon credits and biodiversity net gain contracts.

To the bystander all would appear a sound long term transfer away from taxpayer direct payments to farm businesses and towards nature-based solutions and natural capital. But in reality, with the UK Treasury in control of re-allocating the legacy of the UK's former CAP/BPS Award of £3.2 billion (for which the English Regions amount of £1.85 billion is currently guaranteed across the lifetime of this parliament), the gradual introduction, launch and all important fine detail of any new innovation, investment, recovery or environmental schemes, remains piecemeal. This is the inevitable result of the method of release and the transfer of funds from one pot to another – all subject to delay in start date timelines and with little regard to the practicality for any farm business's long term strategic planning, land use, cropping or seasonality challenges.

One classic example of the SFI initiative is its launch of 'pilot areas' midway through 2022, then 'early adopters' in autumn 2023 and now with a most welcome and significant uplift in payment rates for 2024 we have to wait for the 'summer' start date. Remember too that SFI will only run for a 3 year maximum period whereas Countryside Stewardship was a 5 year minimum agreement and the original Environmental Stewardship was for 10 years. In contrast the ELMS Landscape Recovery Programme is for a minimum of 20 years with many even longer agreements and the incentive to sign up to the Local Nature Recovery Scheme to meet the '30 by 30' target (30% high value for nature by 2030) remains open ended.

Yet despite the many unknowns and roadblocks arising from the various schemes and with real help from the many farm advisors, local land agents and other funded agencies who offer support during transition under the aptly named Farm Resilience fund as well as sound advice in any restructuring of a farm business, farming families are finally facing up to the real challenge of filling the financial gap and the loss of BPS support; this represents 85% of a lowland mixed livestock farm's net profit (on 2021/22 figures). Offers of any new form of capital grant investment programme such as the Farm Equipment & Technology Fund or the Slurry Infrastructure Grant are both welcome but still require the match funding from an already stretched business cash flow.

Likewise, both the mid and higher tiered Countryside Stewardship Schemes Capital Works options for landscape features such as earth bank or Cornish Hedge restoration each require major cash flow outlay for replacement stone, plant hire and labour, plus fencing materials, all before any repayment claim can be submitted upon completion. In reality only the more straightforward and increasingly popular in-field options of low input stock management, Wild Bird Habitats, Herbal Leys and other regenerative measures - each part of a menu of marginal land covers and corridors for nature – attract. These are classified as revenue payments made on a quarterly or annual basis.

However, one of the real success stories of farmer engagement and uptake across the region has been within the Farming in Protected Landscape Scheme (FiPL). Targeted at the 30% land area under protected designation – in Cornwall twelve sites from West Penwith, the Lizard, Bodmin Moor and various coastal areas, plus the Isles of Scilly and Tamar Valley National Landscapes (AONB's), the programme has provided funding for a variety of farm business and community projects under the themes of climate, nature, people and place. But by far the most commendable aspect is the straightforward and simple design and application of the scheme. It is assessed by a local panel of industry leaders and overseen by a project manager; its initial success over the first 3 years has led

to further funding and an extension in the programme, and hopefully it will lead DEFRA to reassess and improve due process of many of its existing schemes.

It is with an element of irony that despite the best of intentions of our green policy makers and the general goodwill of the farming community to commit, shape and share their land with the wider countryside environment, farming businesses remain challenged from global competition and a constant drive for below-cost-of-production food. Meanwhile we all know the real need to keep an acceptable stock level as necessary for national security whilst responsibly addressing both our climate and ecological emergencies. It remains a delicate balancing act for which the aim is to be part of the solution through sustainable farming and making a space for nature.

Martin Howlett

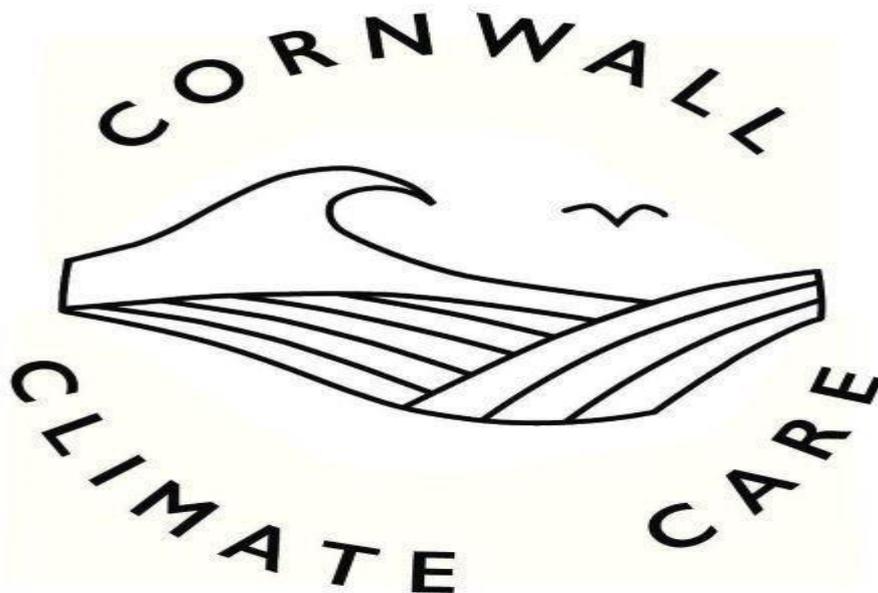
Beef & Sheep Livestock & Arable Farmer.

Tamar Valley National Landscape Partnership Chairman.

Cornwall & IOS Local Nature Partnership Board Member.

Cornwall National Farmers Union - Environment

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## **Deceptive Appearances?**

### **Claire Wallerstein Cornwall Climate Care**

Look around and it can feel that – unlike other parts of the country – Cornwall has barely changed over time. However, appearances in this land of farming and fishing can be deceptive.....

Beneath the surface, decades of farming policies aimed at boosting production, along with the advent of increasingly powerful agricultural fertilisers, chemicals and machinery, have all had huge effects on our environment. The lush green fields we see around Cornwall are very different from those of a generation or two ago. Instead of pastures full of diverse plants, bursting with invertebrate life, small mammals and groundnesting birds, they are now mostly green deserts – heavily fertilised monocrops of high-calorie rye grass that is machine harvested several times a year to make silage.

Where our local agricultural holdings were once mostly small, mixed farms requiring very few external inputs, today we have fewer, more intensive dairy farms with bigger herds of animals, many of which spend much, if not all, of their lives indoors. Price pressures from supermarkets mean each cow is now relentlessly pushed for production. As well as silage, they eat other environmentally-damaging crops such as maize and Amazonian soy.

At the other end, the cows generate tonnes of waste, which is contained in vast slurry lagoons that release methane and nitrous oxide (much more potent greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide). When these lagoons are full the slurry must be spread on the land – often in concentrations far higher than the soil can cope with. While water companies are rightly receiving huge criticism for sewage spills, what's less known is that most of the faecal bacteria and sediment polluting West Country rivers and destroying salmon spawning gravels, actually comes from farm run-off.

Nearly half of Cornwall's land mammals and three-fifths of our butterflies are found in fewer places today than they were 30 years ago, due at least in part to changing agricultural practices, and farming now accounts for 21% of our greenhouse gas emissions here. Something needs to change – but how?

Farming isn't just 'nice to have' - we all need to eat three times a day – and the climate crisis means we will need to produce more food here, not less.

### **Feeding ourselves more – without making things worse?**

Nearly half of what we eat in this country today is shipped in from abroad and Cornwall is in a particularly vulnerable position. The long supply chains that serve us could suffer from multiple climate impacts – from floods or storms affecting the London-Penzance railway to crop failures in the (generally hotter) places we get our food from. Remember last year when supermarket salad shelves were almost empty due to extreme weather in Spain and Morocco?

Cornwall may feel relatively insulated from climate extremes, but we have already experienced record-breaking droughts, floods, storms, rainfall and heat over the past few years. Unpredictable weather events will only become more frequent – and will affect farming more than any other industry.

Post-Brexit subsidies now aim to make farming a big part of the solution to the climate and ecological crises. While the EU's basic payments system paid farmers simply according to how much land they owned, the new ELMS scheme will prioritise things like restoring biodiversity, storing carbon in soils and woodlands, protecting communities from flooding, and holding water in the landscape to mitigate drought. It might sound good on paper, but ELMS has in fact been highly controversial, with claims that making more space for nature can't be done if we want to become more self sufficient.

Farmers work incredibly hard and many are already clinging on by their fingernails. For an industry so dependent on subsidies, the ELMS roll-out has been baffling, uncertain and confusing. But is the future for food and farming as doom-laden as some claim?

### **Can it actually be done?**

The Sustainable Food Trust's report, *Feeding Britain From the Ground Up*, has crunched the numbers and finds that, if we were to produce all our food according to regenerative principles, this would not just protect nature and combat climate change, but also **make us more food secure**.

However, this would mean massively reducing the 30% of food that we currently waste – and also eating differently. We could produce twice as much fruit, vegetables and pulses. However, without chemical inputs we could only produce half as much grain. Since most of the grain we grow is used to feed livestock, this would mean a 75% decline in pork and chicken production, and less dairy too. Our staple meats would be grass-fed lamb and beef. We would actually end up with a diet that is much better for our health (with positive impacts on the NHS) and almost certainly better for animal welfare – but would people be prepared to cut back on the cheese, KFCs and bacon sarnies?

### **Good stuff is already happening!**

Wholesale changes to how we eat may never willingly come to pass, but there are lots of farmers already doing amazingly positive work in Cornwall.

Farmers in the Farm Net Zero project

(<https://farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk/farmnet-zero/>) are demonstrating

(sometimes through age-old practices such as composting and herbal leys) how soils can store much more carbon and water. Others are introducing silvo-pasture (farming livestock around trees) or creating settlement ponds to capture and re-use the massive amounts of precious topsoil being washed away in our increasingly torrential rains.

Change has come in unexpected ways too. The massive increase in fertiliser prices due to the war in Ukraine has led to farmers cutting their use and experimenting with more nature-friendly farming techniques – often finding they can save money without significantly affecting production. Even before the Ukraine war, Hayle-based Riviera Produce, one of the biggest veg growers in the country, had started planting previously-bare winter fields with cover crops that are great for birds and insects but also bind the soil, helping to prevent neighbouring villages from flooding. It has slashed use of pesticides by encouraging natural insect predators and reduced whole-field ploughing, to help keep carbon locked into the soil. If major players like Riviera can adopt these techniques - presumably in a way that stacks up financially - this is a hugely positive sign for the future.

## **Thinking more laterally?**

To address the climate and ecological crises we need to increase not just our food security, but our energy security too. Renewables in the countryside are controversial, however: Cornwall Council has recently turned down applications for some large solar arrays due to concerns about taking up productive farmland.

*[This issue is one of the CPRE's most important campaigns - ed].*

For Cornwall Climate Care's latest film, *Power to the People*, we visited a farm near Liskeard where farmer Anthony Ellis is happily combining renewables generation with food production – simply by raising his panels up 18 inches higher than usual so his sheep can graze underneath. He told us the sheep use the panels for shelter and protection from predators (with significantly fewer lamb attacks by rooks and crows). The grass also holds on better under the panels during heat events. Recent research has shown that, far from being barren places, solar farms actually act as havens for important pollinating insects such as bees, moths and hoverflies – especially in areas where nectar-bearing plants have been wiped out by industrial farming.

We all love our beautiful views here in Cornwall – and of course renewables have a visual impact. But if we don't get on top of climate change it will affect our landscapes far more dramatically than renewables infrastructure, which can be dismantled in future (particularly if we start to obtain energy from promising new potential sources with a lower visual impact, such as deep geothermal heat).

And it's also worth remembering how much other land we use in ways that don't produce food. Cornwall is the world's biggest producer of (inedible) daffodils, while the UK's golf courses take up as much land as all the country's houses!

## **What does the future hold?**

Farmers face huge challenges and uncertainty – which may be increased by new environmental requirements. However, the root cause of the problem is punitive price cutting by the big supermarkets. They have become the cheapest and most convenient place for most of us to buy food. In fact today, we pay relatively much less for food than our grandparents did.

But this relentless cheapening of food is often what has forced farmers to focus on industrial, fossil-fuel dependent production methods, simply to keep their heads above water. Our taxes must then subsidise them because they can't make a living from actually selling their produce. Sadly it has often been the smaller, less industrial farms that have gone out of business.

Can the new ELMS subsidies support farmers in these uncertain times to produce foods that are much better for the environment, the climate and our own health? Time will tell.

### **What you can do**

As well as eating way too much ultra-processed food, we Brits are also eating 50% more protein per day than is good for us. Do your health a favour and support environmentally-conscious farmers, by buying 'less but better' meat and dairy from local, grass-fed animals – rather than industrially-farmed supermarket produce. Or how about choosing venison instead? Wild deer numbers are at their highest for 1,000 years, and they are causing devastation in many woodlands, preventing young trees from coming through.

- If you are able to, sign up for an organic veg box from your local community garden or buy at farm shops or farmers' markets.
- Visit [cornwallclimate.org](http://cornwallclimate.org) to find lots more information and tips and watch our inspiring **Cornwall's Climate Stories** series – including *Food for Thought*, our film presented by an organic beef farmer investigating more of the issues discussed in this article.
- Read the **Sustainable Food Trust** report *Feeding Britain from the Ground Up* here - <https://icdasustainability.org/report/feeding-britain/>
- Sign the '**Get Fair About Farming**' petition to support farmers demanding fairer treatment from supermarkets here - <https://getfairaboutfarming.com/>
- Discover your local regenerative producers and much more information through **Sustainable Food Cornwall** - <https://sustainablefoodcornwall.org.uk>

## Planning Update

### **Gillyflower Golf Club**

On the 21 March 2024, the Strategic Planning Committee considered the latest controversial proposal from Eden cofounder Tim Smit and his son. The application at Gillyflower golf course in an AGLV includes 19 holiday aparthotel 'domes', a clubhouse, a 96 space car park, reception and a classroom. An earlier application for a larger proposal had been refused.

The plans were recommended for approval by the council's planning department, which decided the balance of economic and social benefits outweighed harm to "the distinctive and natural character" of land within an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and "less than substantial harm" to nearby heritage assets, such as Restormel Castle, Grade 1 listed St Bartholomew's Church, a registered battlefield and Lanhydrock parks and gardens.

The committee did not agree with the recommendation from the council's planning department regarding the level of harm and the perceived benefits to Lostwithiel and voted unanimously to refuse the application on the grounds below

*The proposal, by reason of introducing the built development and associated land use onto undeveloped and prominent land in the countryside, would harm the distinctive natural character of the surrounding Area of Great Landscape Value and the settings of nearby heritage assets, including Restormel Castle and the Roman Fortlet (Scheduled Monuments); Lanhydrock (Registered Park and Garden); the site of the Battle of Lostwithiel (Registered Battlefields); the Lostwithiel Conservation Area, including the Grade 1 Listed St Bartholomew's Church; and The Deer Park. The benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the identified harm and the application is therefore not sustainable development and is contrary to the aims and intentions of policies 1, 2, 5, 12, 21, 23 and 24 of the*

*Cornwall Local Plan; saved Policy 14 of the Restormel Local Plan; Policy EH2 of the Lostwithiel Neighbourhood Plan; paragraphs 180, 195, 201, 203, 205, 206, 208, 209 of the National Planning Policy Framework; and Sections 16 and 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)*

## **Recent Decisions**

Gillyflower Golf Club  
19 holiday lodges & classroom  
PA23/02502  
REFUSED

Hotel Bristol, Narrowcliff, Newquay  
180 apartments, 44 bed aparthotel  
Planning application PA22/10572  
APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

Mount Hope Carnon Downs  
PA22/06771 APP/3320137  
Appeal against refusal. Up to 3 dwellings  
DISMISSED

## **Objections submitted to Cornwall Council - Awaiting Decision**

Shute Hill, Breage  
Residential development  
Planning Application PA23/09456

Gwinear Lane  
Solar farm  
Planning application PA23/09696

Pandarosa Farm, Bodmin  
Erection of 58 Dwellings  
Planning application PA23/07573

Bosavern, St Just

Retrospective construction of a lake

Planning application PA23/05034

Trewidden Road St Ives

Erection of a Premier Inn hotel

Planning application PA22/11311

Penhale Camp, Camp road, Holywell Bay Holiday  
and leisure facilities.

Planning application PA22/02896

Penhale Camp, Camp road, Holywell Bay

9 new dwellings 3 refurbished dwellings

Planning application PA22/02794

Trelissick Gardens, Feock

New 250 space carpark, crossing, access

Planning application PA22/10184

Carbis Bay Hotel/The Garrack Hotel, St Ives

Variations to condition 16/Retention of concrete structures & Fence

Planning application PA23/100111 09237

Cold Northcott Wind Farm

Repowering & extension of windfarm

Planning application PA23/02727

Quintrell Downs

400 holiday units

Planning application PA23/09752

Carland Cross, Trispen

Solar farm & battery storage

Planning application PA23/02629

Prow Park Business Village, Newquay  
Change of use of land for containers  
Planning application PA22/05334

Barn Hill, Cadgwith, Ruan Minor, Helston  
Construction of a detached dwelling  
Planning application PA21/12133

Trefresa Farm Rock Wadebridge  
Hotel, restaurant, cinema, spa, 22 lodges  
Planning application PA20/10041

Halgavor Moor  
Development of up to 540 dwellings.  
Planning application PA20/10618

### **Appeals to the Planning Inspectorate - Awaiting Decision**

PA22/06139 APP/3334658  
Penhale Moor, Carnhell Green.  
Appeal against refusal for a solar farm, transformers and substation.

PA23/00924 APP/3320596  
Land North West of Ramehead Cottages, Rame Head  
Appeal against Prior Approval refusal for new agricultural building.

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