



The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Winter Newsletter 2022

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A view from the chair



Could you be the next Chair of CPRE Herts?

As we have acknowledged by advertising for someone to chair CPRE Herts, I would like to retire as, in view of my age, I only accepted the appointment on a short term basis. I have set down some thoughts on the role:

- **The main responsibility is to ensure that CPRE Herts has a well motivated board of Trustees with the necessary skills to formulate strategy and oversee delivery of the charity's objectives.**
- **The Chair provides guidance and support to the staff and volunteers, helps advocate for our campaign priorities, and supports our fundraising, membership and engagement activities.**
- **The greatest satisfaction in the job is in seeing where we influence decision making by Local Authorities so that parts of the countryside especially Green Belt are spared from inappropriate development. It is also very inspiring to be involved in our programmes that encourage people in their enjoyment of the countryside, such as our Awards and Children's Art schemes.**

There is more information about the role on our website.

If you feel that you have relevant experience to become our Chairman and an interest in our efforts to support Hertfordshire's countryside, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please get in touch with Eliza Hermann at office@cpreherts.org.uk

Allan McNab
Chairman

AGM

Saturday 1 October 2022 saw us, once again, at Woolmer Green Village Hall for our AGM. It was a pleasure to see everyone in person, to catch up with those we have not seen for a little while and to meet some for the first time.

Reports were given by our Chairman, Chief Executive and Treasurer, which highlighted our achievements and our ambition for the future and thanked all our amazing volunteers for the huge variety of things they do to help us protect, promote and enhance Hertfordshire's countryside for everyone to value and enjoy.

Sir Simon Bowes Lyon was re-elected as President and Allan McNab as Chairman. John Newbury, outgoing Hon. Treasurer, was thanked for everything he has contributed and Steve Wiltshire was elected as his replacement. Alison Young was re-elected as Vice Chairman. Our Trustee Board were happy to stand for re-election and were all voted in. Information about each of our Trustees is on the website at <http://www.cpreherts.org.uk/about-us/trustees/> Our former Hon. Director Kevin FitzGerald was elected as an Hon. Life Vice President in recognition of his long-term active support.

Paul Miner, Head of Policy & Planning at National CPRE, was welcomed as our keynote speaker. He provided a useful update on the current state of Green Belt land in England, and discussed the most recent government proposals on planning policy. The text of his engaging and illuminating speech is reproduced on the website. Following his talk, Paul fielded about a dozen questions from the floor, providing everyone with straightforward answers.

Afterwards there were refreshments, a raffle and an opportunity to purchase CPRE Hertfordshire merchandise along with time to socialise.

Another very busy period for our planning team with unrelenting pressure for housing on Hertfordshire's Green Belt. A total of 5,568 hectares (13,750 acres) of Green Belt has been identified for development in Local Plans which have been adopted or are under review. This would remove a further 7% of the remaining Green Belt in the county, which has already been seriously diminished.

On a more positive note, we held a very successful CPRE Hertfordshire Awards presentation on 18 October, kindly hosted by Hertfordshire County Council and with many mayors and leaders of local authorities giving their support by attending. The 25 entrants were all recognised for their efforts and ten awards were presented for a range of activities with a positive impact on the protection and enjoyment of the countryside.

I attended the first meeting of the CPRE Network Assembly, which is designed to enhance the communication of ideas and best practice between the National organisation and our 42 County Branches and I hope that it is successful and replaces some of the several present structures which all consume our time.



Appeal: Help us to fight for Hertfordshire's countryside

We've been busier than ever this year, with our beloved Hertfordshire countryside and green spaces under immense pressure for development.

We think the countryside is worth fighting for, and most people agree. An Ipsos poll commissioned by 'The Economist' in September 2022 found that 57% of respondents favoured protecting the countryside over providing new housing.

As part of our fight to protect Hertfordshire's countryside, we've participated in three high-profile Public Inquiries this year:

- Opposing the expansion of Luton Airport, where proposed increases in air traffic and expansion of permissible noise contours threaten the environment and the quality of

life of local people across a wide swathe of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire;

- Protecting Woodcock Hill Village Green in Hertsmere, where Taylor Wimpey has applied for de-registration of the Village Green so they can build new homes;
- Protecting 320 acres of Green Belt land at Aldenham, highly valued by local residents who utilise the 14 Public Rights of Way across the site for their daily recreation. The developer has appealed Hertsmere Borough Council's refusal of permission for a large commercial solar farm that would industrialise the site.

Each Public Inquiry entails a legalistic process including submission of evidence, and testimony and cross-examination of expert witnesses such

as CPRE. We do much of our work in-house but of course we must rely on specialist legal counsel when needed. All of this costs money, both in staff time and external expertise.

Thus our appeal. We are hoping to raise £15,000 to cover our costs, and our heartfelt thanks goes to those who have already generously responded. If you are able to help, please find details of how to make a donation on the enclosed flyer or on our website at <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/get-involved/make-a-donation/>

Thank you, your continued support is very much appreciated.

Martin Varco
Chief Executive

Whither planning!

If there is one thing I have learnt in this job, it is never to anticipate what is going to happen in the planning world between newsletters! We managed to get through three Planning Ministers in as many months over the summer, and whereas we were expecting to respond to the new Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, it would need Nostradamus to forecast the next moves on planning legislation.

What remains of course is the overwhelming need to protect our precious countryside from the increasing threats to its existence. Our short-lived previous Prime Minister was fixated with 'growth, growth and growth' which often leads to calls to deregulate vital planning controls, and increasingly certain politicians are quoting 'supply side reforms' which is shorthand for a bonfire of protections.

We shall see what the new broom does but we can speculate that the 'supply-side reforms' may still figure and we will certainly maintain

our challenges to both Local Plans and planning applications. Our local Green Belt campaign, orientated towards the County MPs and Council Leaders, continues, seeking changes to legislation and technical guidance to ensure that protection means protection. For the record the new Minister since last month is (still) Lee Rowley, MP for NE Derbyshire for five years and previously a financial services and management consultant and we will see how long he lasts.



There is a speculative planning application for 310 dwellings on this site in the Green Belt at Bushey, Hertsmere. Photo by Ian Stewart

On the Local Plans front, there has been some movement on the two very long-running Examinations for Welwyn Hatfield and North Herts. Both planning inspectors have written to their respective councils, and the North Herts correspondence is the final Report which declares the Local Plan sound if the major modifications he suggests are accepted.

Inevitably large areas of Green Belt are still allocated for housing and theoretically Councillors could think again. We have written to all North Herts and Welwyn Hatfield Councillors suggesting that they 'pause' their Local Plans, as Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Dacorum have done. This is to some extent uncharted territory because we have always enthusiastically supported the Local Plan system but increasing numbers of councils are thinking again and there are rumours of changes to the National Planning Policy Framework which could make a big difference.

There are no definitive dates for the next stages of the three 'paused' Local Plans (as above) and St Albans is starting again. A new kid on the block is the South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) which seeks ostensibly to provide a strategic framework for development in the five districts of Dacorum, St Albans, Three Rivers, Hertsmere and Watford.

A JSP document for public consultation has been published and we are responding. Like the Hertsmere Local Plan, it promotes a highly inappropriate standard economic 'growth' agenda for the southern and western parts of the County. We oppose it forcefully as it ignores climate change and biodiversity as well as inevitably implying huge releases of Green Belt for residential and commercial development which is both damaging and unnecessary.

Our bread and butter work on planning applications continues and there is no let-up in the residential proposals, especially in southern Herts. Planning appeals relating to Green Belt proposals throughout the country are showing a bit more variation than previously which is welcome, and further good news is the unanimous vote by Dacorum to refuse permission for 1400 units east of Tring.

I mentioned last time our involvement in the Woodcock Hill Village Green planning inquiry and although the inspector ruled against the objectors, leave has been given to take the decision to judicial review. Judicial reviews tend not to be successful in the planning area but it delays Taylor Wimpey and indicates that objectors are not giving up. There are also moves afoot to register Woodcock Hill as an Asset of Community Value which we will support.

A fair bit of time has been taken up recently with the inquiry into the variation of planning conditions application by Luton Airport. This is not the huge expansion plan to 32 million passengers per annum which is for the future, but the Government determining the application for an increase to 19 million passengers per annum and a variation of permissible noise contours which Luton Borough Council has resolved to grant.

Basically, Luton Airport is trying to get out of its obligations and has assembled a cast of thousands, including two KCs, while we together with LADACAN are the only objectors. Our involvement is targeted on climate change, noise and planning, and it has been characterised in the local press as a David and Goliath struggle!

As important is our involvement in the Combined Objectors Group opposing a huge solar installation at Aldenham

which has been refused permission by Hertsmere. This is a bit of a test case, being on Green Belt and surrounded by nationally significant heritage assets, and we are part of a well-funded local group with legal and technical representation and we have provided evidence on the Green Belt to the inquiry which will report next year.

In conclusion, it is a busy time for the planning team and we are hugely grateful to our volunteers who scour the applications lists and help us with special projects. We are rarely allowed to get bored and returning to my initial remarks, my feeling is that we are in a real sense fighting for the soul of planning which is our first line of defence for the countryside. The JSP response gives us a chance to broaden our concerns to include climate change and biodiversity issues.

Legislation in the form of Climate Change Acts and similar are on the statute books but nothing meaningful is being done to implement their requirements. Inevitably there are conflicting objectives in some cases, such as with renewable energy, but the bottom line is recognising the massive value of the countryside in its own terms and we will continue the good fight.

Chris Berry
Planning Manager

Local plan Overview

District Plan	Comments & Key Milestones	Potential Adoption
Broxbourne Local Plan 2018-2033		Adopted June 2020 (due for review 2025)
Dacorum* Local Plan 2020 -2038	Following feedback from the Emerging Strategy for Growth Reg 18 consultation in Feb 2021, a further Reg 18 consultation is expected June 2023 - TBC.	Oct 2025 - TBC
East Herts District Plan 2011-2033		Adopted Oct 2018 (due for review 2023)
Hertsmere* Local Plan 2020-2038	Following feedback from the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan consultation in Dec 2021, the Council has 'set-aside' the Draft Plan. New draft expected late 2023	TBC
North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031	The examination is complete and the Inspector's report was issued in Sep 2022. The report concluded that, subject to a number of Main Modifications, the Plan is sound, legally compliant and capable of adoption. The Council will now decide whether to adopt the Plan.	2022
St Albans* Local Plan 2020-2038	Reg 18 consultation due July-Sept 2023	Dec 2025
Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031		Adopted May 2019 (due for review 2024)
Three Rivers* Local Plan to 2038	Further Reg 18 consultation due Nov/Dec 2022	2025
Watford* Local Plan 2018-2036		Adopted Oct 2022
Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2013-2032	Examination in final stages following consultation on Main Modifications. Further discussion with Council on 10 year housing provision expected before Inspector is able to find Plan sound.	2022
South West* Herts Joint Strategic Plan to 2050	Reg 18 consultation closed on 4th Nov 2022 See CPRE Hertfordshire response on our website.	2024
Hertfordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan to 2040	Reg 18 consultation closed on 31st Oct 2022. See CPRE Hertfordshire response on our website.	2022

* Five district councils (Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers & Watford) are working on the **South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan** supported by Hertfordshire County Council <https://www.swhertsplan.com/>

Reg 18 Public Consultation: Early stage consultation – may include Issues and Options, Preferred Options and first draft plan.

Reg 19 Public Consultation: Pre-submission draft plan - views sought as to whether the plan is legally compliant and meets the test of soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF.

Examination: Public hearing held by independent Planning Inspector to assess merits of Submitted Local Plan Policies and their soundness.

CPRE Hertfordshire Awards 2022



Our ambition for the Awards is to recognise and celebrate inspirational people engaged in activities which enhance and protect the Hertfordshire countryside and its rural communities.

We held a wonderful Awards evening at County Hall on 18th October, three years since our last in-person Awards event. In 2020 we judged the nominations remotely and were unable to hold our usual Awards evening, while in 2021 we paused the Awards

for a year. It was lovely being able to connect in person again with people involved with nominated projects.

We are very grateful to the Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council, Cllr Annie Brewster, for hosting the event and for her enthusiastic welcome. She said to the representatives of the nominated projects and people present 'please know you are our rural heroes making the most amazing contribution to Hertfordshire life and I thank and congratulate you all'.

Our themes for 2022 nominations can be viewed on our website, together with summaries of all of the nominations and the judges' comments. We were delighted to receive 25 nominations from all around Hertfordshire. Our team of four judges met all of them over the summer.

This year, in addition to the Awards for each of the published categories, there were some awards which recognise special and topical achievements by nominees. The judges also decided to give each nominated project or individual a certificate recording their participation in the 2022 Awards: these were graded bronze, silver or gold.

Our thanks go to all those who submitted nominations, as well as to the nominated projects and people, all working so hard to protect, promote and enhance the communities and environments in which we live.

Elizabeth Hamilton

CPRE Hertfordshire Trustee and Lead Judge

The Results

Dorothy Abel Smith category, certificates:

Bronze: Jake Gutteridge and Tarant Hobbs

Silver: The Go Wild at Hudnall Project

Gold: Sunnyside Rural Trust and The Walled Garden at Stanstead Bury Farm

The Award went jointly to Sunnyside Rural Trust and The Walled Garden (pictured below)



Rural Business in the Community category, certificates:

Bronze: Emily's Teashop, Whitwell

Gold: Groundswell - The Regenerative Agriculture Show and Conference/Weston Park Farms

The Award went to Groundswell (pictured right)



Improving and protecting the environment category, certificates:

Bronze: Friends of Bunkers Park, Friends of Hitchin Cemetery, Friends of Woolmer Green Pond, Regina Gudisauskaite and The Refill Pantry

Silver: Clare Gooden of the River Hiz Conservation Group, Friends of Wormley Open Spaces, The Friends of Hanstead Wood

Gold: Friends of the Rib and Quin and their Founder Mark Wilkinson, Save Beane Marshes and Welwyn Planning and Amenity Group

The Award went to Save Beane Marshes (pictured below)



Made in Herts category, certificates:

Bronze: Central and South Herts Beekeepers - Beginners Course and Sustainable St Albans – Open Food Gardens Project

Gold: Tring's Own Apple Fayre

The Award went to Tring's Own Apple Fayre (pictured below)



Promoting rural life and ensuring that communities can thrive category

The Beautiful Benington Photography Project received a Gold certificate and the Award.

Connecting people with the countryside and their local green spaces category, certificates:

Bronze: Rights of Way Parish Surveyors

Silver: Braughing Parish Paths Group and Heartwood Monitoring Group

Gold: Hertfordshire Walker Website

The Award went to Hertfordshire Walker Website (pictured below)



Special Awards for 2022

An Award for excellent publications which connect people with the countryside, presented to:

Heartwood Monitoring Group (pictured below)



Awards for individuals

In a year when the state of Britain's rivers has been recognised as a national crisis, special awards were presented to two people involved with nominated projects who have made noteworthy contributions to protecting Hertfordshire's rivers:

Clare Gooden, founder and leader of the River Hiz Conservation Group and **Mark Wilkinson**, founder of the Friends of the Rib and Quin (pictured below)



Children's Art Competition

We've officially launched our 2022 Children's Art Competition. The theme this year is Hedgerows Up Close

A different environmental or nature-related theme is set each year and the competition is open to all Primary School children in Hertfordshire. There will be a prize of £500 for the art department in the overall winning school and winning pupils themselves will also receive certificates and gift vouchers, to be presented during the Spring Term. There will be 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in years 0-2, years 3-4 and years 5-6.

We hope that as many primary schools as possible will take part in this year's competition; details have been sent to schools and are available on our website. We are also delighted to receive art directly from individual children if their school decides not to participate. The competition deadline is Friday 16 December and we are again looking forward to receiving a collection of amazing pictures.

CPRE, the countryside charity has developed lesson plans, in collaboration with Countryside Classroom, for students to learn why hedgerows are important and how they help the environment; links to these have been sent to the schools. Pupils will also learn about the animals and plants that live in hedgerows.

Gill Bryant
Office Manager



Isla, Age 8 2021 Competition The Colour of Nature

A Friend Remembered

We were shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death of Richard Young, Editor of Hertfordshire Life magazine. He died on 20th October after a short illness. He became editor of Hertfordshire Life in 2013 and was a great supporter of CPRE Hertfordshire, publishing articles written over our name on many topics about the rural environment in virtually every issue he edited. He sometimes put in little additions to the copy which showed how much he had enjoyed exploring the same area himself. He was always willing to publish information about our Awards and Children's Art Competition too. We will miss his personal interest in our work and our thoughts are with his family and colleagues.

Our concerns about Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) aims to contribute to reversing the huge decline in species abundance in the UK, especially since the 1970s, by introducing measures to increase biodiversity by a minimum of 10% on development sites. The proposals, included in the 2021 Environment Act, are expected to become mandatory in 2023 for all proposed development. If space does not exist on-site, developers can instead opt to fund off-site biodiversity enhancements.

There are many reasons why declines in wildlife need to be addressed. For some it means fewer species to see, hear and be inspired by when out and about, and this deficit might impact on levels of health and well-being. Pollinators are essential to perhaps one third of all food crops. Vegetation provides energy, food, and medicines. Healthy and diverse vegetation has a significant role to play in combatting and mitigating climate change and its impacts.

In March 2022 CPRE Hertfordshire contributed to the national CPRE response to the Defra consultation on BNG. We said that BNG should be considered in the context of CPRE's objectives of protecting countryside and green spaces, and enhancing public access to such areas. Developers will undoubtedly use BNG to justify otherwise unjustifiable losses of countryside. Researchers at the University of Kent who studied early BNG implementation found a 34% loss in open green space, as developers proposed on-site biodiversity gain delivered through higher-value biodiversity in smaller areas.

Many habitats have evolved over long periods into complex associations of species, including those underground, and cannot be reinstated quickly. As currently proposed BNG measures will only have to be retained for 30 years. Enforcement is also a huge issue, with Local Planning Authorities, which will take responsibility for BNG, woefully short of ecological expertise and enforcement capacity.

Developers need to vastly improve their on-site performance in protecting existing biodiversity let alone implementing BNG. We have seen developers wriggle their way out of affordable housing targets and hope that biodiversity will not suffer in the same way.

Developers will have the option to plan for on-site biodiversity increases, or pay for off-site gains. Sending wildlife elsewhere does nothing for communities which value their local countryside. Habitats are very specific to local conditions, and not

necessarily capable of being recreated elsewhere. We suggested that any off-site gains proposed should be local to the development site and be open to public access, ideally in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy areas which the 2021 Act also proposed, to be established throughout England.

I will let Richard Mabey, the Hertfordshire-born nature writer and for many years a Hertfordshire resident, have the last word. In 1980, in his book "The Common Ground – a place for nature in Britain's future?" Mabey wrote: 'The intricate fabric of our landscape is the result of a weaving together of human and natural that spans five millennia'. Later he says: 'We cannot just casually replace one thing by another. A plantation will not 'do' for an ancient wood. A dandelion cannot stand in for a primrose. When the swifts return it is crucial that they are swifts.'

Elizabeth Hamilton
CPRE Hertfordshire Trustee



When a site like this disappears under housing (as this one west of Tring has done) developers will soon have to ensure that the existing biodiversity value of the land is enhanced by at least 10% on or off-site.

A countryside for us all. Forever.

A new leaflet produced by CPRE Hertfordshire promotes the message that you can help protect the Hertfordshire countryside for future generations by leaving a gift in your will.

As you will know from reading this newsletter, today our countryside is under siege. The threats range from inappropriate development such as huge speculative housing schemes, to industrial-scale solar farms on highly productive agricultural land, to the proposed expansion of Luton Airport. We're increasingly teaming up with

local groups, and mobilising local people, to stand up for their precious green spaces.

Through our Awards we also celebrate the achievements of volunteers and businesses who work tirelessly in their local areas to protect and improve the environment, connect people to the countryside on their doorsteps and promote community cohesion in rural areas.

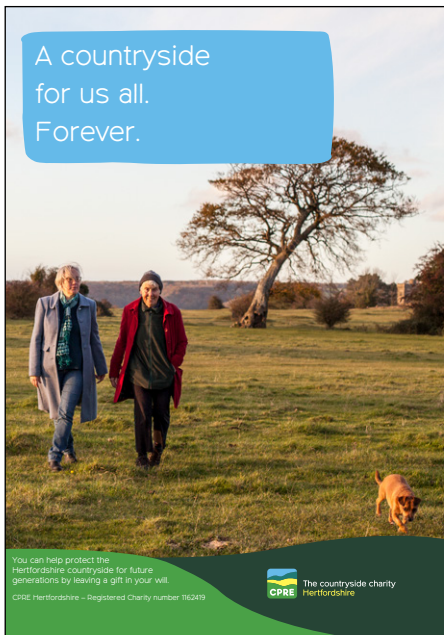
Generous legacies to CPRE Hertfordshire over the years enable us to maintain our small team of part-time staff and larger team of volunteers, who work tirelessly to prevent countryside losses.

With your help our organisation will be able to continue this work. Every legacy, of whatever size, will make a difference to how much we are able to achieve.

Please let us know if you would like a copy of our legacy leaflet. You might also know of somewhere locally, like a library or village hall, where a supply of the leaflet can be left out for others to take home.

To ensure that your generosity benefits Hertfordshire's countryside, please quote our registered charity number 1162419 in your will or codicil.

Thank you.



Old Oak and Little Acorn

Elena Mannion (Author),
Erin Brown (Illustrator)

Hertfordshire-based Elena Mannion has written and published another children's story, *Old Oak and Little Acorn*. A sequel to her book *The Happy Hedgerow*, this beautifully illustrated story follows the journey of a much loved acorn. Carried off by a squirrel, the acorn survives the perils of hungry deer and curious walkers to become a sapling. This tale of regeneration and growth would make a perfect gift for any child aged from three or four.



Diane with her raffle prize

Photo Liz Hamilton

Elena has very kindly donated three signed copies to CPRE Hertfordshire, one of which was a raffle prize at our 2022 AGM. Long-standing volunteer Diane Pettit, seen here, was delighted to select the book when one of her tickets was drawn.

Old Oak and Little Acorn is available from book retailers. Copies of *The Happy Hedgerow* are available from the merchandise section on our website. These copies were also generously donated by Elena, and we are grateful for her continued support.

CPRE Hertfordshire Officers and Staff

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Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO

Honorary Life Vice Presidents:

Dorothy Abel Smith, MBE, Nicholas Halsey TD, DL, Dr Mervyn Miller, Anthony Eastwood, Stephen Pollock-Hill, David Irving, Elizabeth Hamilton, Kevin FitzGerald TD, DL

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Office Manager: Gill Bryant

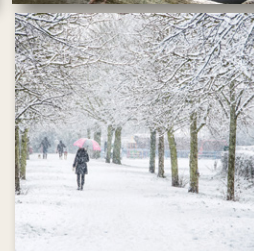
CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Registered charity number: 1162419.

Christmas Cards

A lovely selection of beautiful Hertfordshire scenes, cards are A6 Landscape or 13cm square.

Pick'n'Mix, 70p each with a minimum order of 5 cards - you choose how many of each image.



CPRE Hertfordshire Merchandise

Please support us by placing an order today. Profit from every item funds our work to protect, promote and enhance Hertfordshire's countryside. The easiest way to order is online at www.cpreherts.org.uk/get-involved/merchandise/ and pay with your debit or credit card. Or use the order form enclosed with this newsletter. £3 p&p per order

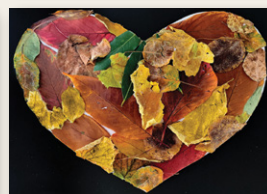
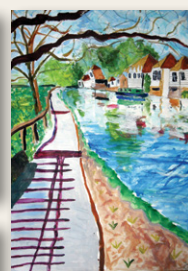
Heavy Cotton Tote Bags

Eye catching and functional, they also make great little gifts. Approximately 36 x 41 cm with long handles to fit comfortably over the shoulder. £4 each



Blank Greetings Cards — perfect for every occasion

NEW – Pack of 5 with one each of 5 different images taken from our popular Children's Art Competition. Size: A6. £4.00 per pack



Four Seasons - Packs of eight, with four each of two exclusive Hertfordshire scenes per pack. Cards measure approximately 15 cm square. All images by local award-winning photographer and long-time CPRE Hertfordshire supporter Chris Howe. £8 per pack of 8 cards



Books

Walking The Lea Valley Walk, The Hertfordshire Way, The Happy Hedgerow, Icons of England and 22 Ideas that saved the English Countryside are also available to order.

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The countryside charity
Hertfordshire