

**SUSSEX**

# REVIEW

**SPRING 2018**

**Shaping Sussex –  
the importance of linking landscapes  
News from the planning front line**

**CP  
RE** Sussex  
Promoting & Protecting  
your Countryside

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# Welcome to the Spring edition of the Review!



Spring is in the air and it's a great time to get out and about and explore the beautiful Sussex countryside. If you are looking for inspiration then I recommend turning to page 6 to find out more about the Arlington Bluebell Walk which was just one of the fantastic winners of the CPRE Sussex Countryside Awards.

We have had a very busy year with volunteers and staff deeply involved in Local Plans in Adur, Arun and Mid Sussex in addition to our usual planning case work. Volunteers have spent a huge amount of time analyzing and commenting on plans for the A27 at Chichester, Worthing, Arundel and East of Lewes, and commenting on the Draft Minerals Plan for West Sussex and applications for oil exploration and extraction.

All this would not be possible without the great generosity of our members and supporters. I would like to thank everyone who responded so generously to our Autumn Appeal which has raised over £8,000! As you know, we do not receive any external funding and are reliant on the contributions from our members to pay for all our work. Your support is vital if we are to continue to be a strong advocate for the countryside.

We are planning another bumper year lobbying for more affordable homes, for more connected habitats for wildlife through new development and farming and for changes to planning policy (the NPPF) to ensure the countryside is better protected.

The CPRE report 'Beauty Betrayed' <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/landscape/item/4707-beauty-betrayed> has highlighted the fact that our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are not getting the protection in practice that they have in law. Our research shows that there has been an 82% increase in new housing units given planning permission in England's 34 AONBs in the past five years. One of the largest development sites is at Pease Pottage (see page 14) in the High Weald. We have written to MPs to ask for changes to the NPPF to ensure major development in AONBs is only allowed in genuinely exceptional circumstances.

This year we desperately need your help. We need to increase our membership, as the more members we have the more influential we are.

As you know, we are a very small charity with a tiny team of staff – just over the equivalent of one full-time paid person, so most work is carried out by a fantastic network of volunteers – our countryside ambassadors. It is important that our volunteers get the training and support they need to protect the countryside.

To start the year, as part of our drive to increase membership, we would like to offer the first six people to 'sign up a friend' a bottle of delicious, award-winning Breaky Bottom sparkling wine (see insert).

**Kia Trainor,**  
*Director, CPRE Sussex*

# Countryside Awards

Journalist Sheena Campbell reports on the inspiring, ingenious and innovative projects which were celebrated recently at Petworth House.



“The woodland directly provides very real benefit to a huge range of people. The idea may be simple but it is incredibly effective and really ingenious.”

*Nick Gant, talking about the Bluebell Walk*

**Above left to right:**

- Fran Southgate, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Dr Barry Yates and Anne Yates, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve
- Robert Worsley and Joanna Worsley, Twineham Timber
- Lady Egremont presenting the Peter Brandon award to John McCutchan and Philippa Vine of Bluebell Walk, Arlington

**Bottom row left to right:**

- Louise Spong of South Downs Yarn
- Deputy Lieutenants of East Sussex, Christopher Whittick and Juliet Smith
- Lady Egremont presenting to Karen Hillhouse, Hastoe Housing Association
- Mick and Dawn Harker, Bridge Cottage



**Left**

- Judges from left to right: Lady Egremont, Margaret Moore (judges co-ordinator), Nick Gant and Dr Geoffrey Mead*

**Below left**

*Left to right:*

- design student Ed Chason and Tanya Gant
- Lady Egremont presenting to Christine Hall of Breaky Bottom vineyard
- Charlee Bennett and Olivia Osorio, CPRE Hampshire, and Joanna Chiffe of CPRE



“We spend so much time in CPRE Sussex with our noses to the grindstone trying to protect the countryside, it is great to get our heads in the air to celebrate it.”

*David Johnson, Chair of CPRE Sussex, left  
Far left: Lady Egremont*

Photographs by  
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The awards are designed to celebrate projects that protect, conserve and improve our county's stunning countryside.

The awards event, held at Petworth House, gave countryside heroes from across the county the chance to receive recognition for their work, with winners ranging from chocolatiers to housing developers.

Chair of the judging panel, Lady Egremont praised an 'extraordinary series of exciting projects'.

Speaking about the fantastic winners, CPRE Sussex chairman David Johnson said: "It is particularly exciting to see so much variety and energy put into a positive future for Sussex.

"We spend so much time in CPRE Sussex with our noses to the grindstone trying to protect the countryside it is great to get our heads in the air to celebrate it."

**"It is a real privilege, we meet so many interesting people who are absolutely passionate about their projects."**

The four awards categories were Rural Enterprise, Environmental Education, Making Places Design and New Sussex Landscapes.

The special Peter Brandon Award, in memory of the branch's former chairman, was presented to The Bluebell Walk Arlington.

Praising the project, judge Nick Gant, the assistant head of Art, Design and Media at the University of Brighton, said: "Tens of thousands of people have been able to engage with this fantastic countryside spectacle.

"The really clever bit is that a huge range of local charities on rotation jointly shares the café and stalls that service the hordes of visitors – 24 charities this year alone and over 50 in total with funds raised fast heading to the million-pound mark.

"The woodland directly provides very real benefit to a huge range of people. The idea may be simple but it is incredibly effective and really ingenious."

Fellow judges Sir Charlie Burrell and Dr Geoffrey Mead, lecturer at the University of Sussex, and past judge and judges co-ordinator Margaret Moore were full of praise for all the finalists.

"It is a real privilege, we meet so many interesting people who are absolutely passionate about their projects," said Margaret Moore. "It is really, really lovely." She said one of her favourite things was how unexpected some of the projects were.

"It is wonderful, you don't know what you are going to get, you can read as much as you like beforehand but when you get there it is always a surprise and nine times out of ten it is inspirational."

Dr Mead said the entire process had been fantastic: "It has been wonderful to see the extent of the talent we have got in the county and how passionate people are about their own particular project and that comes through in the fantastic finalists."

Saying all the finalists had put '100 per cent' into their projects, Dr Mead added: "They just know such a lot about what they are doing, they are utterly involved with what they are doing. It was that complete passion which meant they were in the prize-winning spectrum."

The awards night highlighted the hugely diverse work taking place across the county to protect, conserve and improve our stunning environment.

Winners varied enormously in scale and type, from a rain garden, a brewery and a cycle path through to restorations and new housing developments.

Steve Mednuk, from Franklins Brewery, which was commended in the Rural Enterprise Category, enthused about how inspiring it had been to hear about the work being carried out across the county.

"It is good to see Sussex is full of ingenious entrepreneurs who are leading the way, most of them

**"Sussex is full of ingenious entrepreneurs who are leading the way, most of them utilising what they have around them to create new opportunities."**

utilising what they have around them to create new opportunities which is brilliant," he said.

For many of the smaller projects, to be recognised alongside long-established conservation projects was a real award in itself.

Breaky Bottom Vineyard, Rodmell, won a New Sussex Landscapes award – recognising landscape enhancement.

Peter and Christine Hall, from Breaky Bottom, were praised for their two-part project. Their first goal was to conserve and restore a traditional flint threshing barn so it could function as a key component of the wine making process but still have all the features of an early 19th-century flint agricultural structure.

Second was to create a flood-defence scheme for the farmhouse which wouldn't look like a flood defence scheme. They successfully managed both.

"We are really thrilled to get an award, our restoration has really been a lifeline to the business," said Christine. "It was just great to be recognised as we are a very small business, only a six-acre vineyard."

As well as receiving their awards, all our finalists and guests were warmly welcomed and treated to a champagne and canapé reception in the stunning setting of Petworth House.

Lord Egremont, president of CPRE Sussex, said he had been very happy to play host for the evening as the awards are 'exactly the sort of thing we want to support'.

"I have been involved in the CPRE for a long time now and it is a cause very dear to my heart."

# A selection of highlights



## **Bluebell Walk, Arlington:** Rural Enterprise and Peter Brandon Award

Judges were blown away by the way this project uses one of the country's most iconic natural wonders – bluebell woods – for the benefit of the community.

Since 1972, John McCutchan and his team have helped tens of thousands of people to experience the 'fantastic spectacle' of the woodland's bluebells.

They have also teamed up with 50 charities to help raise almost £1m.

Speaking at the ceremony at Petworth House, John said: "So far, we have raised £966,000 for the charities we work with and we should reach £1m next year which we are very excited about."

Visitor numbers to the walk are increasing each year, with parents who visited as children now starting to return with their own families.

As well as a commemorative plaque, Bluebell Walk was presented with a sculptural award, created and carved in oak by Brighton University design student Ed Chason.



## **The Oak Community Project, Durrington:** Environmental Education Award

Conservation and education come together at the Oak Community Project.

The project helps people who have experienced a range of challenges and encourages them to take part in conservation projects in West Worthing, Durrington and Goring.

Presenting the award, Dr Mead, said: "This not only benefits the species within the woods but most importantly, benefits the participants who learn how to use various tools and, as a result of their activities, improve their mental and physical capabilities."

"It is just nice to be recognised," said co-ordinator Chris Hughes.

"I saw the awards on Facebook and thought we are definitely qualified for that. I applied on behalf of the guys and now here we are."

Daniel Shields takes part in the project and joined Chris for the awards evening.

"It has been really good, it is fantastic," he said.



## **Rye Harbour Saltmarsh:** New Sussex Landscapes Award

The recreation of the saltmarsh was a partnership between Sussex Wildlife Trust, The Environment Agency and the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, under the management of Dr Barry Yates.

In August 2011, the sea was allowed to flow back into the area, creating further saltmarsh, saline lagoons, grazing marsh and reed-bed habitats.

It is now the most biodiverse reserve in Sussex with a species list exceeding 4,300 – more than 200 of which are considered nationally rare.

**"The saltmarsh around Rye Harbour has contracted over the last 100 years so it is wonderful to reinstate a piece of it."**

The project also created easy-access paths and birdwatching hides. "The reserve is in a very public place so it is not only helping wildlife, it is also helping visitors to enjoy it."

"The saltmarsh around Rye Harbour has contracted over the last 100 years so it is wonderful to reinstate a piece of it and have the wildlife respond so very quickly," said Dr Yates.



### Littlehampton Rain Garden: Making Places Design Award

Judges praised this project for being ‘attractive, innovative’ and ‘an ingenious design’.

Volunteers transformed bare grass verges into attractive gardens to help prevent flooding caused by rain falling on the roads with nowhere to drain off.

Terry Ellis, from the Littlehampton Civic Society, said it was fantastic the Rain Garden was getting recognition because it was a true community project.

“So many different people worked on it from children up to adults, from the residents to the councils, everybody,” he said.

“When we first opened in July, we had very hot weather, so even the firemen from the fire station opposite got involved and watered it daily.”

“The people of the town have recognised it as being important. People respect it and it is proved to be really effective.”



### Ostlers Field, Brede: Making Places Design Award

The development at Ostler’s Field, Brede, allowed 13 local families to stay in their community.

Not only are the houses affordable but the running costs are low thanks to a host of energy-saving features, including low-energy lighting, solar heating and water-saving devices.

**“The homes at Ostlers Field have helped ensure local families can stay living and contributing to the area they were born in, grew up in or work in.”**

“We are thrilled that our affordable housing development in Brede has been recognised by these awards,” said Karen Hillhouse, from developer Hastoe Housing Association.

“Hastoe takes great pride in helping rural communities thrive by building affordable, energy-efficient homes that fit with the local vernacular of the village.

“The homes at Ostlers Field have helped ensure local families can stay living and contributing to the area they were born in, grew up in or work in.”

## All winners, highly commended and commended

### Environmental Education Award

**Winner:** Oak Community Project, Durrington.

**Highly commended:** SoSussex Schools Without Walls.

### Rural Enterprise Award

**Winners:** Twineham Timber; Egret’s Way, Southease; Bluebell Walk, Arlington.

**Highly commended:** Weald Smokery, Flimwell; South Downs Yarn, Rustington (below); Saddlescombe Farm.



**Commended:** Noble and Stace Chocolatiers, Easebourne; Franklins Brewery, Ringmer.

### Making Places Design Award Winners:

The Big Parks Project, Peacehaven; Ostlers Field, Brede; Littlehampton Rain Garden; Bridge Cottage, Uckfield.

**Highly Commended:** The Courtlea Housing Development, Petworth; Foresters Cottage, East Dean.

### New Sussex Landscapes Award

**Winners:** Rye Harbour Saltmarsh; Breaky Bottom Restoration Project, Rodmell (below).

**Commended:** Hendall Manor Barns, Heron’s Ghyll, Uckfield.





# Shaping Sussex

## Imagine you had a Persian carpet

**Dr Tony Whitbread, Chief Executive, Sussex Wildlife Trust explains why an increasingly fragmented countryside is so detrimental to wildlife.**

Suppose you had a beautiful Persian carpet – highly valued, exotic and intricately patterned – which has been with your family for generations. Then imagine you cut it into several dozen 6-inch squares. You might keep some favourite squares but the vast majority get lost. If you then brought together your few carpet-like fragments I don't think anyone would think they had their carpet back again. The pattern would be unrecognisable, it wouldn't join up and the fragments wouldn't cover the floor so it wouldn't even function as a carpet!

This might seem a strange thing to do yet this is where we are with nature conservation.

Deep in the past we had an extensive, functioning, natural environment spreading across the whole landscape. Habitats were all interconnected, merging one with another, and the landscape was 'permeable' to wildlife. Although ever-changing, species and habitats would have been viable in the long term. They would always have been there.

We are now left with just a few pieces of isolated habitat. They don't form a recognisable pattern, they don't join up and they don't function as a matrix. Species can't move and adapt with change, so they disappear.

Whether nature reserves or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), what we have left is just bits. Their conservation is, of course, vital. But, alone, this does not deliver the functioning natural environment on which we all depend. Even if we preserve the best bits, species will still vanish.

**Above:**

Barn Owl © Darin Smith

**Below left to right:**

Ladybird lava by Gerald Legg

Field Vole by Darin Smith

Common frogs by Dave Kilbey

Otter by Darin Smith

Fox by Jon Hawkins, Surrey Hills

Photography

Produced by kind permission of  
Sussex Wildlife Trust and Gerald Legg



Fragmentation and isolation of habitats often goes unseen and poorly reported, but is probably one of the great drivers to wildlife loss. A loss here and there is barely noticed, especially if it is an 'ordinary' piece of countryside, rather than a nature reserve or SSSI. The inter-connecting pieces in a matrix may not appear special enough, have no rare species, are not particularly rich, or may even look scruffy. An ordinary hedgerow, strips of rough grassland, patches of stinging nettles, some common flowers in a roadside verge, an apparently empty stream – not noticed when they are there and not missed when they go.

But without that hedgerow a barn owl may have nowhere to forage, without stinging nettles we may lose peacock butterflies, pollinating insects need that patch of common flowers and fish need to get upstream to spawn. Lose parts of the matrix and we lose those species, and we eventually reduce all the multiple benefits that nature provides to society.

An interconnected matrix of habitats also functions better. Think of a river valley. Isolated patches of wetland support fewer species. A contiguous expanse of wetland, however, not only supports more species, it also provides all manner of benefits to people – such as holding back flood water, encouraging water to filter into our aquifers, fixing carbon and ameliorating pollution. Wetlands work better when they are a continuous whole rather than isolated fragments.

**“Fragmentation and isolation of habitats often goes unseen and poorly reported, but is probably one of the great drivers to wildlife loss.”**

Nature is always changing; species appear, move, disappear and reappear. As conditions change making one place less hospitable, conditions may become better in another. Woodland butterflies, for instance, often prefer the open glades of a managed wood. As one glade gets shaded by tree growth, another may be opening up so becoming more suitable. The wood changes, glades appear, disappear and reappear, but the butterflies are always present. Without this matrix we gradually lose the butterflies – and this is why we have lost so many of our woodland butterflies over the last 50 years.

We have had some limited success in protecting the rare and special. But erosion of the matrix seems almost impossible to prevent. One fracking well does not remove much woodland, one housing estate may only remove a short section of hedgerow, minor pollution may not appear important in an empty stream and a tidy garden looks better without stinging nettles. But this all adds up to a major threat.

The Persian carpet analogy only goes so far. Nature is dynamic and so perhaps more reminiscent of the changing patterns of a kaleidoscope than the fixed pattern of a carpet. Carpets, also, cannot mend themselves.

Nature, on the other hand, can – it can replace its missing fragments (as long as we are not missing too much) – which is why conserving the remnants is so important.

Sussex is fortunate in that is better off than many counties. We do have many special places, but we also have an overall landscape that is still something of an ecological network.

For example, if you look across the Weald of Sussex it might look more like a forest with occasional clearings, rather than a landscape of isolated woods. Our Ebernoe Common nature reserve is one of the best sites in Britain for bats, but they are only there because the wider area is effectively a matrix of forest – all joined up allowing bats to forage throughout the area.

**“Sussex is fortunate in that is better off than many counties. We do have many special places, but we also have an overall landscape that is still something of an ecological network.”**

I believe that we are in a time when the focus will change. Of course we must conserve the best of what remains, but our attention will turn more towards looking after the wider ecological network. Not to preserve it in aspic, but to maintain the dynamic and ever changing kaleidoscope that typifies the English landscape.





# Alarm at huge fall in flying insects

Professor David Goulson from Sussex University, one of the scientific team carrying out a major study last summer, outlines why a dramatic decrease in flying insects has implications for all life.

It is a sad truth that wildlife is in decline, at both a national and a global level. In the UK, butterflies and birds have been decreasing in number since detailed recording began in the 1970s, and probably for long before that.

Every year, on average, there are fewer of these species than the year before, with declines most marked in farmland species. For example, UK farmland bird numbers have fallen by 51% since 1970 according to the British Trust for Ornithology, with an overall fall in the total UK bird population of 44 million since 1966 – equating to the loss of one nesting pair every minute for the last 50 years.

Unfortunately, we have no population data for the majority of species, most of which are invertebrates – insects, spiders and so on. Aside from the exemplary butterfly recording scheme and a smaller scheme for moths, we have no good long-term data on population trends of UK or European insects.

This is worrying, for these unloved creatures make the world go round;

they are at the base of the food chain for many birds and mammals, they pollinate, control pests, recycle dung and dead leaves, and much more. As the biologist E.O. Wilson once said, “If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos.” We really ought to find out how these creatures are faring.

**“If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos.”**

An alarming new study from Germany suggests that things are not well in the insect world. Amateur entomologists from the Krefeld Entomological Society have been quietly trapping insects on nature reserves cross Germany for the last 27 years, using Malaise traps – tent-like contraptions that catch flying insects. In an impressive effort for unpaid enthusiasts, they sampled 63 sites on a total of 15,249 trapping days between 1989 and 2014, catching a grand total of 50.8 kg of insects.

They have yet to make much progress with counting or identifying the vast numbers involved, but the patterns in biomass caught per day are striking. Towards the beginning of the study, the traps were catching about 9g per day of insects. By 2014, the most caught at any site was about 2g per day, with an average of about 1g. Overall, the data show that the biomass of flying insects in German nature reserves has fallen by 80% in 25 years.

We do not know for sure whether similar declines have occurred elsewhere. Land use in Germany is broadly very similar to the UK and France, for example, so we might expect similar patterns here. It may be anecdotal, but many of us remember a time when car windscreens became rapidly obscured by splattered insect corpses when driving in summer, something that simply does not happen today.

**“Many of us remember a time when car windscreens became rapidly obscured by splattered insect corpses when driving in summer, something that simply does not happen today.”**



Above left to right:  
Hoverfly, Crane fly, *Sarcophaga* feeding, Hornet  
Photographs by Gerald Legg

This may partly be because cars are more streamlined than they were, but there are still plenty of boxy 4x4s on the road, and their screens are just as clean. It seems likely that we are indeed living through a period of massive declines in insect abundance.

I've been involved with other scientists in analysing and trying to explain the German data, and it is puzzling. One possibility is that the massive habitat loss that occurred earlier in the 20th century as farming became industrial has left an 'extinction debt'; populations of insects living on small nature reserves are not viable in the long term, and so are disappearing one by one.

A second relates to the massive use of pesticides on farmland. No less than 500 different pesticides are registered for use in Europe, with arable crops being treated with up to 20 each year and horticultural crops receiving many more. In particular, the introduction of systemic insecticides such as neonicotinoids in the mid-1990s

is likely to be contributing to insect declines. These chemicals are persistent, highly toxic to all insects and appear to be frequent contaminants of soils, streams, wildflowers and hedgerow plants in arable areas. They have been implicated in the decline of bees, and also butterflies, aquatic insects and insect-eating birds.

**"The introduction of systemic insecticides such as neonicotinoids in the mid-1990s is likely to be contributing to insect declines."**

Most of the nature reserves are islands surrounded by intensive farmland, and it may be that these pesticides are contaminating the nature reserves, or perhaps they simply render the surrounding farmland inhospitable to insect life so that any flying insect that wanders off the reserve is likely to die.

## What can we do?

Whatever the causes of this decline, if it continues then there will be precious little insect life left in a decade or two more. So what can we do? There is no quick fix, but there are many small things we can all do to help.

- ❖ **Write to your MP and Michael Gove, urging them to use farm subsidies post Brexit to support local producers, and to cut the subsidisation of industrial farming.**
- ❖ **Write to your council, urging them to reduce mowing of verges and roundabouts, to stop needless herbicide applications to city streets, and to leave areas of city parks for wildflowers.**
- ❖ **Make your garden insect friendly: grow nectar-rich flowers, don't use pesticides and put up a 'bee hotel'.**
- ❖ **Eat less meat, especially corn-fed beef. Buy organic, local, seasonal food from small-scale, sustainable producers.**

These may seem like small steps, but if enough people take them we might yet ensure a future for wildlife and ultimately for ourselves.

# How dark is your sky?

## Mid Sussex member Jane Watson explores the increasing threat of light pollution.

*Above:  
The Horsehead Nebula,  
Sussex night sky  
by Robin Durant*

*Far right:  
Orion from the  
South Downs  
by Simon Downs*

When was the last time you stood outside and spent half an hour looking up into the night sky? The chances are that you have probably glanced up on the way to your car, or noticed the stars before shutting your curtains at night, but not given it much time. Take the time to gaze now though because in Sussex, our star-studded night skies are in grave danger.

Data from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in America shows the bright lights of a growing urban sprawl are reaching further and further into our countryside. The news comes as no surprise to the county's astronomers.

"We are very aware of the problems of light pollution which is encroaching on our night skies more and more," says founder of the East Sussex Astronomical Society, Andy Lawes. "With the increasing number of building projects, the night sky is becoming ever less visible to our future generations."

There is a growing body of evidence which shows that increased light pollution can damage wildlife and even upset human sleep patterns. However, there are also some other, less quantifiable reasons why our night skies are so important.

"Dark skies offer a view of nature that can't be found anywhere else," says Dark Skies Officer for the South Downs National Park, Dan Oakley. "A wide, open starry sky allows residents and visitors to engage with nature on a galactic scale. Not only does that make us think about those larger questions in life and how small and precious we and Earth are, but it does one very important thing... it puts a smile on our faces. Who doesn't like to see more stars?"

In 2016, thanks to the combined efforts of the National Park and astronomers like Dan Oakley, the South Downs area was designated as an International Dark Sky Reserve – one of just 11 in the world. However, keeping the bright lights at bay in the busy south east of England is likely to be a constant challenge:

"Development will inevitably reduce sky quality as streets and homes need lighting," says Mr Oakley, "but lighting can be designed effectively that reduces its impact. As with many streetlights throughout the South Downs, provided that dark-sky-friendly lights are used then the impact on sky quality will be reduced. One other way to mitigate the damage is to look at development sites themselves. Where there are options, it may be possible to select sites that are further away from the dark skies."

CPRE has used the NOAA data to create a map which shows the full impact of light pollution across Sussex. The analysis reveals a mixed picture with Crawley District named as the sixth worst light polluter in England and – at the other extreme – Wealden identified as one of the UK's top 20 darkest districts.

“Light pollution in Crawley is now at such a level that dedicated astronomy software is no longer able to track the sky from my observatory near the centre of Crawley,” says Vice Chairman of the East Sussex Astronomical Society (ESAS), Paul Foster.

“West Sussex County Council has said that Crawley has been designated as a 24-hour town due to its proximity to Gatwick,” he adds. “This generates a large amount of vehicle movement and has staff working shift patterns 24 hours a day seven days a week. Also there are currently no plans to implement part night lighting within Crawley and the surrounding areas, so as Crawley expands, the problem with light pollution is going to get steadily worse.”

CPRE Sussex is now calling on local authorities to use the maps to identify areas with severe light pollution and target action to reduce it, as well as identifying existing dark skies that need protecting.

“Light pollution is the greatest enemy of all those who want to enjoy the night sky,” says Chairman of the Adur Astronomical Society, Robin Durant who has an observatory in north Brighton. “The way we are going, our children and theirs will not be able to know what wonders there are to be seen by just looking up at the night sky and learning about the universe.”

“Evidence shows that many kids are growing up without being able to see the Milky Way – our home galaxy – which is a real shame,” says Dan Oakley. But he is optimistic about the future: “Just like any other rare habitat, the South Downs are an inspirational place and laboratory for the next generation of star trekkers. We have a long tradition of astronomers and scientists in the UK from Newton to Hawking and they would have all been inspired by a dark sky. Who knows, there may be a physics super brain out there just waiting to start their academic journey from an inspirational night on the Downs.”

The full map and reports can be seen here:

<http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk>



## Orion

### Betelgeuse

### “Orion’s belt”

### What to look out for in winter

“Orion is easy to spot in the southern sky at the moment, and you need to find the three stars of his belt. Dangling down is his sword and if you look carefully you’ll see the end star of the sword is a little fuzzy. This cloud is the Orion Nebula – a large cloud of hydrogen gas where new stars are forming. Better still try and use a set of binoculars and you’ll see the cloud a little more clearly and possibly even the four stars of the Trapezium cluster within the nebula that illuminate the cloud like car headlights in the fog. Being able to see the Orion Nebula means that you are under a dark sky and you should be able to see the Milky Way just to Orion’s left.” Dan Oakley



# District news from the planning front line

The latest news from CPRE Sussex's District groups shows how the government's drive to raise housing targets is failing to deliver much needed sustainable development.

Many Local councils across Sussex are finding themselves forced into a corner by the ever-shifting goalposts of Local Plan housing targets. As a result, CPRE representatives from Hastings to Chichester are reporting unprecedented numbers of sites on green fields being approved for development.

One of these sites, Pease Pottage in Mid Sussex, is in the unspoilt countryside of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is, shockingly, to be developed with 600 homes planned to meet the needs of nearby Crawley – making it one of the UK's largest mass-housing development in an AONB. The CPRE report 'Beauty Betrayed' (available on the CPRE website) has highlighted the fact that our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are simply not getting the protection in practice that they have in law. Research commissioned by CPRE shows that there has been an 82% increase in new housing units given planning permission in England's 34 AONBs in the past five years. **CPRE Sussex is lobbying hard for urgent changes to planning policy and guidance to ensure AONBs get the same protection, in practice, as National Parks.**

Mid Sussex District Council is hoping to have its modified Local Plan adopted early in the New Year but Mid Sussex representative, Michael Brown says the District has an almost impossible task ahead: **"The challenge of finding sustainable locations for this massive hike in new building without ruining the prized rural character of Mid Sussex is going to be a formidable one."**

"It will put huge pressure on the District to give proper weight to the environmental and countryside protections that planning rules purport to offer when assessing site allocations and planning applications. **The role of CPRE has never been more important.**"

It is a similar story in neighbouring Horsham where the council has an adopted Local Plan in place but now faces a Review which could impose astronomical new housing figures on the district.

"Coincident with this review, is the Government's proposed use of a new 'formula-based' method to determine housing-targets," says Dr Roger Smith. "Horsham District Council has calculated that the new method could increase the District's already high target from 800 to 1,173 houses per year." He has written to Horsham's

MP Jeremy Quin stating “An increase of this magnitude would require one or more additional strategic sites and doubtless result in yet more development on countryside adjoining villages across the District. Horsham Council has made public its concern that a target of 1,173 houses is unachievable and would therefore open the District to indiscriminate development and that, without major government investment, local infrastructure and essential services – already overstretched – would not cope.”



*The 'New Monks Farm' site where Adur has plans to develop, including building a massive Ikea*

The two coastal districts of Arun and Adur are also feeling the pressure. Adur had its Local Plan approved by the Planning Inspectorate in September. This new plan includes large developments on two important sites in the strategic gap between Lancing and Shoreham – ‘New Monks Farm’ (which would include a massive IKEA), and Shoreham Airport. These are both sites CPRE Sussex has fought long and hard to protect.

“We will keep strenuously opposing these inappropriate developments,” says Adur spokesman, Bill Freeman. “If given the go ahead they will have a significant impact on views from the South Downs National Park, the iconic Lancing College and create major traffic issues and air pollution on the already congested A27. There will also be huge loss of wildlife habitat and increased drainage problems.”

If possible the situation is worse next door in Arun where the district council is still working on the production of a sound Local Plan. Housing targets here are expected to nearly treble in just two years. Arun’s joint district leads, Michael Warden and Alan Smith, say this just isn’t realistic:

“We made the argument at the hearings that the market cannot accommodate this level of growth and that house builders will slow their build-out rates to ensure that they receive the maximum amount of profit,” Michael says.

“The problem is that if this happens the council will lose its five-year housing land supply and once again the Local Plan will be weakened, threatening all the Neighbourhood Plans and opening the District up once again to

speculative development. In short, the plan will fail. The other problem is whether the necessary infrastructure in relation to flood mitigation, transport infrastructure and waste water treatment is scheduled to accommodate this level of growth.”

There are similar stories from across West and East Sussex with Chichester in the west and Rother and Hastings in the east both struggling to meet the increasing demands of the planning system.

Consultation on Chichester’s Local Plan ended in August with an expectation that significantly more sites will need to be allocated for development amid growing concern about the impact this will have on the surrounding countryside and local infrastructure.

Meanwhile, 60 miles to the east, the green fields of Rother are proving to be an easy target for developers who are exploiting out-of-date housing figures and the council’s inability to demonstrate a five-year land supply.

“I do not really want to blame the council because it is house builders who are not building out permissions granted,” says Rother and Hastings spokesman, Stephen Hardy. “But the recent reaction to this supposed crisis is for Rother planners to recommend granting any application that comes in the High Weald AONB, no matter that most of the sites up for approval were categorised by the self-same Rother officers three years ago as red sites, ie. those not suitable, for whatever reasons, for development.”

**As the government’s tinkering with the Planning system continues, the news from across our districts is that getting the right development in the right places is increasingly difficult and the threats to the Sussex countryside are unprecedented.**

Only Wealden – the district named in 2016 as one of the 20 least light polluted areas in the UK – has reported a small window of respite. Here CPRE Sussex has been working alongside local communities to thwart exploitation of loopholes in the planning laws by developers. In March, the district council suddenly halted all new major planning applications due to new evidence regarding the impact of traffic pollution on the Ashdown Forest.

“Developer applications that had been submitted but not heard in a Planning Committee were then put on hold,” explains CPRE’s David Connoley. “Instead the Planning Committees have been focusing on brownfield applications and single or minor housing developments. Needless to say though, the developers are not happy with Wealden’s strategy and are looking to overturn this decision as soon as possible.”

## Giving the countryside a voice

CPRE is unique in lobbying locally and nationally for a fairer and more balanced planning system.

**It is clear that without CPRE and its dedicated team of volunteers the voice of Sussex countryside would not be heard over the clamour of developers pushing for profitable greenfield projects across the county.**

As Michael Brown reported from the Mid Sussex Local Plan Examination: “The Campaign to Protect Rural England was a lonely voice at the hearings arguing that the District lacks the environmental capacity to absorb such a huge level of housing and that the more ambitious the target, the greater the risk that the Council will fall back into default in delivering on its target. Default would force the Council to free up yet more countryside for development.”

In neighbouring Lewes, John Kay has written a powerful letter to MP Maria Caulfield urging her to take action on the government’s flawed proposal to boost housing figures and on a scam being used by developers to maximise profits and dodge their responsibilities on affordable homes.

Dr Kay explains how the developer scam works: “A Ringmer landowner obtained planning permission for a site for 18 market and 12 affordable houses on a greenfield site. She then discovered that the sewerage connection was going to be much more expensive than she expected, so sold the site to a ‘house builder’ at a price that reflected this. The same day the buyer sold the site on to a planning consultancy at a 50% profit. The new buyers are relying on being able to jettison the affordable housing element and otherwise ‘improve’ the planning permission by using the viability argument, which they are allowed to base on the price they have overpaid.

“Note that the landowner has already made a profit from land value uplift and the first intermediary has also

profited from a smart deal. The second intermediary is looking to do the same by improving the planning permission before selling the site on again. Will the new buyer be an actual house builder or yet another developer, looking for an even more profitable outcome?”

“We have examples of such chains five developers long, and THIS is what is presented to ministers as ‘delays in the planning system’ and why planning permissions have gone up fast, but actual house building remains sluggish.”

**Without this kind of intelligent lobbying by CPRE’s knowledgeable representatives, the beautiful Sussex countryside would be left at the mercy of flawed policies and profit-led destruction.**

In addition to this, the Brighton and Hove group has been tackling the complex issues surrounding maintaining urban green spaces and been active in opposing the sale of downland and reducing light pollution. They have also been keeping an eye on the city’s trees and wildlife. The group’s representative, Corinne Attwood says, “We are now also focusing our attention on the City Fringes and on defending the strategic gaps both between villages and between villages and the city.”

If we don’t stand up for the right homes in the right places and for a living countryside, who will?

### Balcombe: oil exploration approved

CPRE Sussex was a strong voice amongst the 2,700 objectors to Cuadrilla’s application for further exploration at Balcombe. Despite the forceful objections made locally and nationally and the Government’s ambitious plans for ‘clean growth’ and a low carbon future, West Sussex County Council approved the application in January this year.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>



# Healthy trees, healthy landscapes

**Dr Roger Smith joined an event to support National Tree Week hosted by the South Downs National Park Authority, the Tree Council and the Cowdray Estate.**

‘Healthy trees, healthy landscape’ was the days theme. Dr Roger Smith gave an overview of the importance of trees and woodland in the Sussex landscape and, based on data published by Forestry Commission and WSCC, highlighted the existential threat posed by disease, including ‘ash dieback’.

He also called attention to the need for computer modelling to predict how the county’s treescape and therefore landscape might change over time – and how the impact of disease on trees could or would be

exacerbated by climate change. Dr Smith emphasized that the impacts of development on woodland should also be given serious consideration, illustrating his point with the current proposal for the A27 option which would run through ancient woodland near Arundel.

Clearly there is an urgent need for effective regulation, underpinned in law, to protect ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.

During the afternoon, DEFRA Minister Lord Gardiner discussed with Dr. Smith the issues he’d raised, including the lack of protection for

*A centuries-old oak, one of several venerable trees that have survived in Cowdray Park, near Benbow Pond.*

*Those assembled include DEFRA Minister, Lord Gardiner, and representatives from the Tree Council, Landscape Institute Biosecurity Working Group; Forestry Commission, Alice Holt Research Station; Horticultural Trades Association; South Downs National Park Authority; Cowdray Park (Head Forester); and CPRE Sussex.*

*Note ‘butchers broom’ growing at foot of the tree; this occurs intermittently in designated ancient woodland.*

veteran trees and the consequent urgent need to provide protection in law, with which he whole heartedly agreed. Encouragingly, he is also an advocate for and supportive of trees in towns/cities.

**“Clearly there is an urgent need for effective regulation, underpinned in law, to protect ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.”**

# House sparrow survey: the results

Graham Ault, our planning for nature champion, thanks you all for your amazing response to the house sparrow survey!



Photograph by Colin Leeves

A huge thank you to everyone who returned our house sparrow survey forms earlier this year. The response was brilliant with over 150 forms returned. This means we have been able to draw some useful conclusions about the status of these iconic birds.

Although the study is limited by the inevitable fact that the responses are thinly spread across a very wide area – and results are therefore far from conclusive – sparrows appear to be doing well in much of Sussex.

## Locations of respondents

The majority of returns were from people living in villages and the rural fringe. The results confirmed our expectation that many people saw house sparrows regularly. This was also true of the much smaller number of responses from urban settings though, which may be because those who saw sparrows regularly may have been more likely to respond. It would be interesting therefore to have more returns from people who do not see sparrows on a regular basis, particularly those living in large towns or cities.

## Nesting sites for house sparrows

Many of you reported knowing of nesting sites in your gardens or locally, and the most popular sites were bushes and hedges, with traditional roof sites lagging behind. This may be due to modern house building which restricts natural sites under roofs.

## The Brighton and Hove Project

We are delighted to be a partner in the house sparrows project being run by the Brighton and Hove Wildlife Forum, which is looking at the populations in the 'big city' locations where they are most at threat. They have reached the end of the first year of their work and they have found some good populations in Brighton and Hove but also areas where sparrows are mostly absent.

Information from our members who live in Brighton and Hove has been incorporated into the project, which the Forum is very grateful for. More details are available at

**<http://www.BHsparrows.uk>**

## How can we help sparrows?

The report suggests bird-friendly garden management, the use of purpose-built sparrow nest boxes, and building nesting cavities in roofs of new housing developments could increase house sparrow populations. The full report is now available on our website and we hope you will find some time to read the results and keep supporting this project. We are particularly keen to hear from members who might like to carry out more detailed surveys of their local area, especially those who do not see house sparrows regularly.

**Please contact us at [info@cpresussex.org.uk](mailto:info@cpresussex.org.uk) if you would like to get more involved.**

# TOURS & TALKS 2018



## Southdown Yarns

20 Sea Lane, Rustington,  
West Sussex, BN16 2RT

Friday 11th May, 2pm

£5 – includes tea and cake  
12 people maximum

*Countryside Award Highly Commended,  
Rural Enterprise*

Louise Sprong established Southdown Yarns to promote the Southdown breed and its habitat. It is a small company telling the story of wool, encouraging makers to use sustainably produced natural materials.

The wool is all from fleeces of sheep bred locally on the Downs and hand dyed using plants Louise grows. She will discuss with us her dyeing techniques and the flocks she works with. There will be wool for sale on the day.

## Saddlescombe Farm

Saddlescombe Road, Brighton, BN45 7DB

Thursday 24th May

Tractor- trailer tour 10am -12 noon,  
followed by lunch served in the café  
30 people maximum

£16 per person (includes lunch of lamb or  
vegetarian burger, a flapjack and a drink)

*Countryside Award Highly Commended,  
Rural Enterprise*

Enjoy a morning on a traditional Sussex Farm where wild flowers will be blooming and lambs and calves in the fields to delight us!

Camilla and Roly Pusey the National Trust's tenant farmers champion traditional farming practices while running a modern livestock business and acting as custodians of an SSSI and a rural heritage site. We will see hedgerows restoration, pollen and nectar-rich meadows and species-rich grassland. Currently the farm has 450 breeding ewes, a herd of pedigree Sussex cattle and Saddleback pigs. Meat from animals raised on the farm can be bought in the farm shop.

Roly will share with us the challenges he faces as a 21st-century farmer.



## Bluebell Bushcraft

Terra Amata Farm, Broadford Bridge Road  
West Chiltington, West Sussex, RH20 2LF

Saturday 16th June, 10am – 1pm,  
minimum age 4 years

£12 per child to include drinks, campfire  
snacks and a gift to take home.

*“Spend a fun packed morning with Matt  
Harder at his Bush-craft school.”*

Places are available for children of all abilities for an Explorer Package. This includes a series of activities and tool use, fun games and challenges in the heart of the wood. There will be campfire cooking, den building and exploration of the outdoor with experienced bushcraft trainer Matt Harder, a member of the Forest School Association.

## Tours and Talks 2018 Booking Form

Name/Names

Address

Telephone

Mobile

email

# TOURS & TALKS 2018



## Folkington Manor

Folkington, East Sussex, BN26 5SD  
Monday 18th June at 2pm

£17 includes a talk, private tour and afternoon tea

We meet in the recently restored Flint Barns.

*"Back by popular demand!"*

Last year's visit to Folkington manor was so heavily oversubscribed we needed another visit! This historic Victorian Manor house, set at the foot of the Downs, has a long and continuing artistic heritage. The owner, Mrs Brunjes will discuss this as well as giving us an insight into the restoration project which, over the past eight years, has seen both the house and gardens lovingly returned to their former glory.



## Sedgwick Park House and Gardens

Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 6QQ

Thursday 28th June at 2pm

£14 includes a private tour of the house and gardens followed by afternoon tea.

*"Where Alice Liddell, Lewis Carroll's inspiration for Alice in Wonderland, spent her honeymoon."*

From the grounds of this house you can enjoy fine views across the South Downs towards Chanctonbury Ring and Lancing Chapel. Featured in the *English Garden Magazine*, this beautiful Grade 11 mansion and garden boasts formal gardens designed by Harold Peto. The impressive water garden, the "White Sea", has 20 interlocking ponds. In addition there are parklands, woodlands and meadows sustaining rare butterflies. Seedsmen come regularly to collect wildflower seed. The current owners have expertly furnished their house in 1940's period style.



## Breaky Bottom Vineyard

Whiteway Lane, Rodmell, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 3EX

Wednesday 4th July at 2pm – 4pm

£13 to include wine tasting  
24 people maximum

*Countryside Award Winner, New Landscapes*

*"There is no more beautiful vineyard in Britain than Breaky Bottom." Oz Clarke*

Breaky Bottom is an isolated farmstead set in a beautiful secluded valley in the South Downs. Although it is a small-scale, family-run business it is still able to compete with the big players to produce top quality sparkling wine. Established in 1974 by Peter Hall it is the oldest vineyard in Sussex.

Breaky Bottom's Award recognised two projects – the restoration of a traditional flint threshing barn now used in the wine making process and a sensitively designed flood defence scheme.

The focus of our visit will be a talk by the owner, Peter Hall, on the ups and downs of running a vineyard and a wine tasting.

Visit name and date	No. people	Total Cost
<b>Southdown Yarns</b> Friday 11th May No. of people @ £5 (tea and cake included)		
<b>Saddlescombe Farm</b> Thursday 24th May No. of people @ £16 (lunch included)		
<b>Bluebell Bushcraft</b> Saturday 16th June No. of children @ £12 (drinks, snacks, gift included)		
<b>Folkington Manor</b> Monday 18th June No. of people @ £17 (afternoon tea included)		
<b>Sedgwick Park, House &amp; Gardens</b> Thursday 28th June No. of people @ £14 (afternoon tea included)		
<b>Breaky Bottom Vineyard</b> Wednesday 4th July No. of people @ £13 (wine tasting included)		
<b>Grand total</b>		

Please fill in form, make cheques for the total amount payable to **CPRE Sussex** and send to **Tours and Talks, CPRE Sussex, Brownings Farm, Blackboys, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 5HG**

Please send a **stamped** addressed envelope for your tickets and travel directions with your booking slip and payment.

Refunds can only be made for cancellations 14 days before the event and will be subject to a £5.00 booking fee.