

Winter 2022

Sussex Review

we are

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The countryside charity
Sussex



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CPRE Sussex is shaping a greener future for Sussex. We promote beautiful landscapes, rich in nature and greener towns and cities. We campaign for countryside and green spaces accessible to all. We champion thriving communities and sustainable development. We encourage effective responses to the climate emergency.

The Review

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Welcome to our 50th Birthday Edition!

We are excited to be marking the 50th Anniversary of CPRE Sussex this November. This is an important milestone and offers us the opportunity to look back at all we have achieved together and look forward to how we can continue to shape a greener future for Sussex.

We would love to hear your ideas for how we make the most of this moment through events and activities in our 50th year.

It has been wonderful to work with the impressive team of staff, trustees and volunteers who work so hard for Sussex. With limited resources, we make a real difference. One of the reasons for this is the drive and commitment of our volunteers. Another is how we work in close collaboration with other organisations to achieve our goals. Finally, and what makes it all possible, is the invaluable support of you our members and supporters, who enable us to sustain our work year after year.

I also want to specifically thank four individuals who are moving on or changing their roles with us after years of loyal and effective work:

To Stephen Hardy, who, for more than ten years as a Trustee, represented Rother and provided the charity with excellent legal and planning advice.

To Bill Freeman, who is also stepping down as a Trustee but continuing to tackle the challenges facing his home district of Adur and Worthing.

To Michael Brown who has moved to Surrey but will continue to contribute with wit and wisdom via our blog.

Lastly to Jeannette Towe for her input as a Trustee this year. Thank you all!

We continue to tackle a wide range of issues to protect, promote and improve our countryside and urban green spaces. This year our activity has included campaigns against inappropriate housing developments, the proposed new A27 bypass, water pollution and sewage discharges, the resurfacing threat of fracking and the proposal for a Center Parcs in ancient woodland.

We have influenced local plans and planning applications and offered a Sussex view on many government consultations. Working with the council and residents, we have planted more than 100 big street trees across Brighton & Hove, seen campaign success as the High Court overturned a decision to develop a 'green gap' between Goring and Ferring, and have been pleased to welcome many of you to walks and talks throughout the year.

The future, as always, is uncertain but we remain sure of our purpose and of our vision for a greener future for Sussex. I hope you enjoy reading the Review and will pass it on to others.

Brian Kilkelly FRSA
Interim Director
November 2022



1972 Elizabethan banquet at Arundel castle to raise funds to set up the branch of CPRE Sussex.



Former chairman and vice president Dr Peter Brandon

CPRE Sussex: A potted history

A selection of highlights 1972-2022 compiled by Oliver Hilliam

CPRE's early origins in Sussex

Even at 50, we remain one of CPRE's younger groups, but the organisation had been fully engaged in protecting the county's countryside since the creation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England in December 1926.

A major catalyst for CPRE's central call for 'rural planning' to regulate building in the countryside was the 'national disgrace' known as Peacehaven. So it was fitting that, in that same month, this unplanned new development on some of the nation's finest countryside was the subject of an article in the first issue of the Sussex County Magazine. The publication described Peacehaven as a 'calamity of architectural calamities' one that 'could be matched nowhere in Europe except in Canvey Island and the poorer peasant holdings of Belgium'!

CPRE's response meant by 1932 the first Town and Planning Act gave local authorities much more control over development. By that time, CPRE had already nominated the South Downs for National Park status in their 1929 memorandum to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, overseen by their Lancing College-educated secretary, Herbert Griffin. Other early national CPRE campaigns – often in tandem with the Sussex Downsmen – also saw notable victories over pylon lines and, in 1933, a motor racing circuit proposed between Edburton and Fulking.

A branch for Sussex

CPRE were also represented on the Sussex Rural Community Council's countryside committees until 1971, when the Duke of Norfolk stepped down from the Presidency of the national organisation in order to form a dedicated CPRE branch for Sussex.

CPRE Sussex was formally launched at Arundel Castle in November, 1972, with Rodney Dennys in the chair and the Duke remaining its Patron until his death in 1975. The first year's work included efforts to prevent a beautiful Rotherfield valley becoming a refuse tip, with our campaigners calling the dumping of untreated waste a 'disgusting and outdated practice'. Elsewhere, the development of Wadhurst Park for 'restaurants, sauna baths and grass track racing' was also stopped, while the chairman personally lobbied Brussels bureaucrats on the impact of continental juggernauts on rural Sussex.

Receiving Her Majesty's seal of approval the partnership with the Sussex Downsmen continued in 1974 with a joint campaign preventing damaging development in Jevington. But the highlight of the year saw Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II enjoy an update on our work from thrilled volunteers manning our stand at Ardingly Show! By the late 1970s, that programme of work was increasingly dominated by modern environmental concerns.

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.

The branch had begun working with farmers to highlight the benefits of retaining trees and hedgerows, leading to compromise agreements that saved many ancient specimens. We were then part of a successful national campaign to prevent the drainage of the precious habitat of Amberley Wild Brooks. By the end of the decade, CPRE Sussex was warning against the environmental impact of Gatwick expansion and calling for a limit of 16 million passengers a year, rather than the 25 million being proposed.

Unlikely support for our oil campaign

The 1980s began with new chairman David Gibson giving evidence against the Gatwick expansion to the public inquiry. The branch also began a successful campaign against a leisure development in the heart of Nook Beach Nature Reserve – an unspoilt remnant of ancient marsh landscape. We then took on fossil fuels, opposing the 'defacing effect' of oil exploration at High Park Farm in Ditchling by arguing that 'the downland is a national asset in a deeper and wider sense than can be claimed for any mineral which may be below it'.

By 1986, a CPRE Sussex-led campaign against oil drilling at Fairlight Down saw us convince the council to turn down the scheme on the grounds of its impact on landscape beauty. We even won celebrity backing for the campaign, with local residents Paul and Linda McCartney

attending a CPRE site visit. Linda's atmospheric photography of the threatened site was later featured in a BBC documentary and a CPRE exhibition at London's Royal Festival Hall. The same year saw CPRE lobbying to ensure the eastern half of the South Downs became one of the UK's first five designated Environmentally Sensitive Areas, with farmers being funded for conservation schemes and environmental stewardship.

From strength to strength

The late-80s was a period when CPRE Sussex stepped up our support for communities facing a wave of development pressure, beginning with our defeat of 150 homes on the edge of Linfield. Other public inquiry appearances saw our chair Peter Brandon convince the Secretary of State to dismiss a quarry extension at Streat and development on the edge of the South Downs at Wannock. His appeal for the proposed Worthing bypass to avoid downland was heeded by transport minister Virginia Bottomley. An outstanding period of success culminated in the successful defence of Tilgate Forest from a business park on the edge of Crawley, with each victory helping to recruit many new members.

After fighting this rear-guard action, attention moved to promoting proactive policies to protect and enhance important landscapes –



Bill Bryson supporting the South Downs National Park campaign with volunteers at Elsted Village Hall, 2007



Hilary Benn with the South Downs National Park Confirmation Order alongside member Maureen Holt.



Awards judges 2017:
Lady Caroline Egremont,
Margaret Moore and Nick Gant



Protest against Fracking in Balcombe, 2013

starting with CPRE Sussex hosting a major 1990 conference on the future of the South Downs. We subsequently revived the campaign for a South Downs National Park, with national CPRE campaigner Fiona Reynolds a key contributor to a CPRE Sussex leaflet setting out the case. Our campaign gained extensive national media coverage, with *Country Life* remarking, 'nothing but good can come of the CPRE's continued pounding'!

Building public support

With the government pursuing economic growth from a land-hungry combination of road-building and out-of-town retail, a CPRE Sussex manifesto for 1992's General Election urged candidates to deliver stronger countryside protection. Ultimately, without changes in policy, we could only slow the rate of loss, with outright victories becoming rarer – including the saving of AONB downland at Patcham from a retail complex in 1993.

But our arguments were increasingly resonating with the public, and CPRE Sussex reached a momentous 2,555 members in 1997 – making it the largest CPRE branch only 25 years after forming. That backing was instrumental in our challenge to house building targets imposed on West Sussex County Council, leading to a reduction of 13,000 homes following yet another public inquiry. Before the decade was over, we also welcomed a government statement

that the South Downs would be given National Park status. Two days earlier, a memorable 1999 AGM saw speaker David Dimbleby give retiring chair Peter Brandon a warm send-off, praising CPRE Sussex's 'steeliness and ferocity in its defence of the countryside'.

Strategic victories and valiant defeats

The new millennium began with Transport Minister Stephen Byers rejecting the proposed Hastings Bypass in response to the CPRE Sussex argument that any economic benefits were far outweighed by environmental harms. Meanwhile, the National Park lobbying continued through our detailed suggestions to improve the preliminary boundaries, in order to maximise the amount of Sussex countryside protected. But CPRE Sussex could not prevent the new Amex stadium from being built on the South Downs landscape of Falmer, despite valiant campaigning throughout the early 2000s.

In 2006, more than 420 responses to a CPRE Sussex survey found members' top priority was the retention of Sussex's rural character, including its hedgerows. The public engagement continued with our event opposing major development around Polegate attracting almost 600 local people, most of whom signed our letter of protest to Wealden Council. The following year saw us defeat plans for a landfill site at Freshfield Lane Brickworks,

ensuring the surrounding High Weald AONB would be saved from an increase in heavy lorry traffic. Other notable victories of 2007 included saving almost 20 acres of countryside within Barnham's 'strategic gap', and preventing a section of the South Downs Way near Cocking from being opened up to motorised traffic.

Disappointment followed, with the 2009 decision to allow the controversial Hastings to Bexhill link road to go ahead through the beautiful Coombe Valley, despite independent advice from CPRE and others showing the route would harm the Hastings economy and environment.

'No' to new towns!

Better news came within weeks though, as CPRE Sussex welcomed the refusal of three housing application appeals on the edges of Uckfield. Then, in May 2009, another major success came along as our campaigning helped convince housing minister John Healey to abandon a proposed 'Ecotown' at Ford, which we argued would have concreted over some of the finest agricultural land in the country.

After a long campaign and public inquiry, CPRE Sussex were finally able to celebrate in May 2011, when the Secretary of State dismissed plans for 520 homes at Honey Farm, west of Polegate. We had worked with local residents, parish councils and Wealden Council

to demonstrate this was, in our director Stuart Meier's words: "The wrong plan for the wrong houses in the wrong place – on the wrong side of the busy A27 ... residents would actually have been fenced in with anti-climb fences 'for their own safety'."

In 2013, we had another major development to contend with, in the shape of the proposed Mayfield New Town of 10,000 homes, near Wineham. Our campaigners welcomed the support of local MPs Nick Herbert and Nicholas Soames in presenting a petition against the plans to 10 Downing Street. Major national media coverage and the support of local farmers meant the plans would soon be thwarted. Elsewhere, we helped villagers in West Chiltington and East Hoathly prevent developments that would have impacted on wildlife-rich or ancient woodland.

Eco-warriors

CPRE Sussex become pioneers of the campaign against a new form of fossil fuel extraction in 2014, as we called for a ban on fracking in protected areas, with the South Downs under threat from the new process at Fernhurst. Meanwhile, the fight against more traditional oil extraction continued, with our campaign against drilling at Markwells Wood ultimately successful.



Making Places, working with the residents of Ford in Arun

Biodiversity became a theme of 2016, as we joined forces with Sussex Wildlife Trust to run a training session on planning for biodiversity. Meanwhile, two A-level students joined the branch on a placement researching biodiversity and land management, with a focus on butterfly populations. We also launched our pioneering Making Places manual at RIBA in London, the result of a one year project, now ongoing to explore what 'good design' means to local people and influence new development.

In 2018, CPRE Sussex's Roger Smith met with Defra Minister Lord Gardiner, during National Tree Week, to lobby for regulations to protect ancient woodland and veteran trees. But as well as protecting existing trees, our Plant Your Postcode initiative has spurred an increase of urban tree planting in recent years. Highlights include helping Eastbourne volunteers to set up 'Treebourne' which saw 6000 whips planted, and more than 100 large new street trees planted in 'Forgotten Places' around Brighton.

Anticipating the revival of CPRE's national hedgerow campaign, we also supported the planting of a hedge at Hove Junior School, to attract wildlife and help screen traffic pollution from the playground, before appointing an official Sussex Hedgerow Champion in farmer Derek Crush.



Plant Your Postcode volunteers planting trees

Hope for the future

Meanwhile, the 2020s has seen ongoing transport work continue, as we seek to prevent damaging dualling and bypasses along the A27 and prevent the environmental destruction and health-damaging noise of Gatwick expansion.

As a positive counterpoint to the past decade's struggles, our CPRE Sussex Countryside Awards have showcased the projects and businesses that are enhancing the county's landscape and rural character.



Ringmer college 2014 Award Winner 'Providing students with a sustainable future in a rural environment'.



By 2040, in an ideal world... our vision is of:

1
Countryside and green spaces accessible to all, enriching our lives and improving our health

In 2040 Sussex remains a rural county, home to ever more wildlife, with countryside that enhances all our lives.

More people have learned to value the green spaces on their doorsteps and the wider Sussex countryside and enjoy better physical and mental health as a result.

Children learn about nature at school and older people continue to understand, value and love the natural world in local green spaces or through countryside visits.

Volunteers help to inform people about the countryside and to look after it.

Electric vehicles and sound screening alongside main roads let residents enjoy silence and tranquillity.

In areas with dark skies, like Ashdown Forest, lighting is restricted so people can see and admire starry skies and light pollution is reduced everywhere across Sussex to protect wildlife.

2
Beautiful landscapes, rich in nature and greener towns and cities

Protecting and enhancing the Sussex countryside

Many more of us now understand the need to protect and nurture nature to ensure our very survival. We will be reducing the effects of climate change and reversing the hugely damaging environmental impact our contemporary world has on the environment.

The South Downs National Park is managed to conserve and enhance its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

Our High Weald and Chichester Harbour Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are managed to preserve and improve their natural beauty and protect them from inappropriate development.

Farmers receive subsidies to maintain diversity of farming, not simply for owning land. They produce our food while protecting our natural environments, working to increase biodiversity, improving our soils and adapting to climate change.



Tree planting in Brighton with residents of Surrenden Road



Agrochemicals and fertiliser use is reduced and slurry run-off is effectively controlled preventing pollution in rivers and streams.

Protecting and improving our natural environment has become the number one priority for all our local authorities, utility companies and statutory authorities.

Greening towns and cities

Communities are involved in tree planting projects across our towns and cities. Children join the planting and protect their trees over the years. The greening reduces pollution, traps carbon dioxide, provides health benefits for residents and homes and food for wildlife.

3 Sustainable development and thriving communities

Meeting the need for homes

New houses are built on brownfield land and other unused sites in larger cities and towns across Sussex with a monetary value placed on the environmental implications of every development.

Market towns have expanded by infilling or extending with minimal landscape impact. New homes are built in scale and in keeping with the local vernacular. In smaller villages, new homes for local people are helping to reverse the decline in services.

Affordable housing for workers and their families to rent and buy has priority and developers must deliver the affordable housing agreed in a planning permission.

With increased government funding, local authorities are able to build much-needed

social housing with good transport links, provision of local services and linked to work opportunities.

All new developments are now sustainable, built to achieve minimum climate impact, with health, social care and educational provision. They also include wildlife features to ensure there are real environmental gains.

Maintaining a thriving local economy in Sussex

In 2040 rural communities in Sussex are vibrant with diverse populations, local jobs and accessible services.

High speed broadband provides opportunities for small businesses to start up and grow. This and home working provide jobs locally, reducing the need to travel or commute.

Shared workspaces and internet cafes in small towns and villages offer training, networking and social opportunities.

Where new non-residential buildings are necessary to meet local needs, they are designed to fit into the landscape and boost biodiversity.

4 Effective responses to the climate emergency

Getting around

Since the 2020s the imperative to reduce greenhouse gases has been grasped and electric vehicles are replacing petrol and diesel vehicles.

Higher taxes on jet fuel are reducing air travel as costs rise and plans for a second runway at Gatwick Airport have been dropped to

avoid increasing carbon emissions and reduce pollution and pressure on the local housing market.

Cycle and pedestrian routes link homes, new and old, to local transport terminals and facilities, reducing the need for short car journeys and there are more, faster trains.

Where public transport is limited, there are car-sharing schemes reducing car ownership.

Major road and bypass proposals, such as those along the A27, have been dropped in favour of smaller scale improvements.

Transport routes are managed to provide corridors for wildlife, plants and wildflowers.

Meeting energy needs in Sussex

Renewable energy has largely replaced carbon fuels in homes and businesses. Our electricity is generated by offshore windfarms, solar (in appropriate locations), community renewable energy heating schemes and biogas generated from waste conversion.

All new buildings are designed to be energy efficient. Existing homes are increasingly well insulated. Gas central heating has been switched to electricity. There is no fracking for shale oil in Sussex.

Achieving sustainability in Sussex

Public pressure combined with taxation and other charges means manufacturers take responsibility for the lifecycle of their products, minimising household and industrial waste.

Consumers use products longer before recycling them.

Single-use plastic has been replaced by biodegradable or recyclable material.

Society has reduced food waste, which together with farm waste and sewage sludge, is converted into biogas and fertiliser via anaerobic digestion.

Better trade and industrial waste disposal facilities, plus the enforcement of severe penalties, have reduced fly tipping and the air pollution generated by illegal waste burning.

More sustainable waste management means reduced waste incineration. Litter has been dramatically reduced, by eliminating unnecessary packaging and introducing deposit return schemes in combination with education and tough fines.

Realising the vision

Reforms to the planning system are necessary to realise this. By 2040 planning for housing, the environment and land management is no longer fractured but is now well integrated across government departments.

Local voices are heard and communities are fully involved in planning decisions. Strategic groups of local authorities have more power and political weight and use this to maximise long-term benefits for Sussex.

Supporting CPRE Sussex

If you share our vision for Sussex in 2040, why not volunteer with us? There are many ways in which you could help to achieve this vision. If you'd like to volunteer with CPRE Sussex, please phone **01825 890 975** or email: **info@cpresussex.org.uk**



A 'nature positive future'?

Is government reneging on its commitment?

Dr Roger F Smith on facing up to the challenges of constantly changing government policies.

The Growth Plan 2022, published by HM Treasury in 23 September, which makes growth the government's 'economic mission', neither recognises nor acknowledges the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

Instead, the plan makes clear the government's intent to revoke vital EU-derived environmental laws that provide much needed protection for at-risk and vulnerable wildlife and habitats of national and international importance.

Succumbing to a flawed and unproven dogma, the authors of the plan would have it that these laws and the protections they provide are obstacles to economic growth, home ownership and the provision of new infrastructure and must be removed 'to drive higher growth'.

On the same day, to expedite the removal of these laws Defra introduced to Parliament its Retained EU Laws (Revocation and Reform) Bill.

The government is reneging on its previous pivotal commitment, made in response to The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review (July 2021), to: "(1) delivering a 'nature positive' future, in which we leave the environment in a better state than we found it, and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030; and (2) ensuring economic and financial decision-making, and the systems and institutions that underpin it, supports the delivery of that nature positive future".

No matter that the then government agreed with the Dasgupta Review's* fundamental conclusion that "nature, and the biodiversity that underpins it, ultimately sustains our economies, livelihoods and well-being, and so our decisions must take into account the true value of the goods and services we derive from it"

Disturbingly, The Growth Plan 2022 neither recognises nor acknowledges the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK.

How will the abolition of these laws impact on nature and the ability to combat Climate Change?

We need to be asking our MPs if they are aware of The Dasgupta Review. Have they read it and the government's response and commitment quoted above? Have they examined the ONS's UK Natural Capital Accounts: 2021, which estimates 'the financial and societal value of natural resources to people in the UK'?

They should note the advice therein that "The natural world supports all life on earth, and its collapse would precipitate our own".

You can find links to the sources for this article at: www.cpresussex.org.uk/news/dont-let-the-growth-plan-trash-our-natural-environment/

*(The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review. Government Response, presented to Parliament by the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, July 2021).

Will 'toughest targets ever introduced' crack down on sewage discharges?

asks Dr Roger F Smith

In a press release issued, 26 August 2022, with the headline 'Toughest targets ever introduced will crack down on sewage discharges', the government announced the publication of its Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan.

Unfortunately, this promising headline, is not matched by the limited targets and overlong timelines set by the government for water companies to achieve.

The plan stipulates: "So that discharges only happen when there is unusually heavy rain and when there is no immediate adverse impact to the local environment:

"By 2035, water companies will have to improve all storm overflows discharging into or near every designated bathing water; and improve 75% of overflows discharging to high priority nature sites.

"By 2050, this will apply to all remaining storm overflows covered by our targets, regardless of location."

In essence the plan enables water companies to carry on polluting.

Because of huge house-building targets, and because the incidence of unusually heavy rain is forecast to increase, the resultant discharge of sewage into watercourses and inshore waters is likely to increase exponentially.

Consequently, it is CPRE Sussex's position that:

- 1 There is an urgent and vital need for joined-up planning in which the cumulative impact of sewage discharges on the environment and public health is determined and factored into the making of development plans, including the calculation of housing targets and the allocation of sites.
- 2 Any development that is likely to increase pollution, regardless of whether a five-year housing land supply can be demonstrated, should be refused.
- 3 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill should be amended to include these requirements.

What do Sussex's MPs and councillors say?

Contact your MP or local councillors to ask what they are doing to hold water companies to account now, not in 2050 - in particular to prevent sewage continually polluting the rivers and coastal waters where you live.

You can find links to the sources for this article at: www.cpresussex.org.uk/news/governments-storm-overflows-discharge-reduction-plan-is-not-on-target/



Time to put the environment first

**Dan Osborn, Emeritus Professor of Earth Sciences,
University College London and Chair, CPRE Sussex**

Ardingly reservoir, October 2022

Water is precious and in the South East, pressured by housing and climate change. It is a limited resource and we supply and treat water by using technology to process and clean it for human, business and agricultural uses. Water is needed for the environment as well. That last need has reached crisis point. There is too little water for the environment and what there is can be polluted. Many experts are arguing it is time to put the needs of the environment first and budget for the other uses only after that.

In the current circumstances, where economic arguments are often considered as the sole test of whether a development is sustainable, the environment's need is given insufficient prominence. This has bitten hard in the south-east of England in terms of threats to special nature sites such as chalk streams. As a result, Natural England have written to local authorities saying future housing developments must not make the situation on water levels in rivers or nutrient pollution worse. In many places in Sussex this has led to a 'pause' on planning decisions on new housing because no one knows how to redress the balance between water for nature and water for humans. Horsham District and some parts of the Chichester District are particularly affected by this pause in granting permissions.

Blocking planning decisions on greenfield sites might seem like good news to many members. But the underlying infrastructure capacity issues are so serious that not only are there problems

with sewage but also with drinking water supplies. Both these issues will get worse in future if housing numbers continue to rise. Inadequate water supplies and waste water treatment would both threaten human health and impact wildlife. This is because the foundation stone of public health is clean water.

This situation in the south-east of England will be made worse by climate change. In a warmer world the Earth's huge water cycles work differently making extreme events such as floods and droughts more likely. The hosepipe bans across much of the South of England are but one manifestation of these problems, especially as they have lasted well into the autumn.

The water companies who are obliged by law to supply and treat water are struggling to keep up with the demand. The level of investment to modernise facilities in just one Sussex town is of the order of £40M. Solutions to this problem for developers are being busily sought but some of these involve offsetting schemes that are completely untested and may not deliver. It seems that what we can manage to deliver technologically is being outpaced by the pressures being generated by government policies that suck housing into this water-stretched part of England.

We use a good deal of water in the UK for human uses. Households use about 150 litres a day per person. If there is to be enough water for all our needs in future then this needs to come down to about 85 litres a day – more or

less half current levels of consumption! If this cannot be achieved then, as consultations from the water companies are making clear, more water storage facilities will be needed to keep abreast of demand. Large reservoirs are being suggested at several locations in the South-East with at least one in West Sussex not far from Henfield.

Reducing consumption really means thinking twice about how we use water. We may need to think about not just how much we use when brushing our teeth but what plants we grow in private and public gardens so that less watering is required; about how often cars and other vehicles are washed or whether less wasteful approaches can be taken to such activities; and about how best to irrigate crops in dry periods. We might also have to accept that meeting demands means recharging groundwater with treated waste water something that is technologically possible but that might not be publicly acceptable.

Industry and the transport sector need to play their part. Yet when plans for new developments come forward – such as with the ideas for expanding the capacity of Gatwick airport – water gets scant attention because of our out-dated approach. It is almost assumed by developers and planners that water is in infinite supply when it is very much a finite resource that could only be expanded through expensive desalination and other technological means.

The environment of the south-east as a whole is under intense pressure from economic developments of many different kinds. A rethink on water is urgently needed. Changes to the water cycle are an aspect of climate change that is mentioned too little for our own good. Water needs to be upfront as a major factor in all decisions taken on economic development.

Advocating making sustainable use of water is one step CPRE Sussex is taking to shape a greener future for Sussex. To make our use of water more sustainable we need strong environmental standards applied which means good regulation not no regulation. In this respect the current government's approaches to environment protection will leave our health and wellbeing exposed to needless risks. We are in correspondence with local MPs and members of the House of Lords on these and related issues to ensure our local voice is heard.

Please visit our website to complete the CPRE Sussex survey of your views about water at www.cpresussex.org.uk/cpre-sussex-water-survey/ We will convey members' views to Southern Water alongside those from members of the public which we have been gathering as well. We all need to engage more with water as many people have either never thought much about it or find the subject difficult to engage with.



Dominic Gardner, Lee Farm, Angmering Park, West Sussex © NFU

Sussex farming now

Our journalist Sheena Campbell talks to local farmers Dominic Gardner, Jason Lavender and Derek Crush.

For generations most of us had a deep connection to the countryside and farmers shaped our landscapes as they fed and fuelled the nation.

However, urbanisation has seen us move away from the countryside. So, have we, and our metropolitan politicians, developed a blind spot about the realities of living and working the land?

We spoke to farmers in Sussex about the need for collaboration to tackle challenges from food production, to increasing biodiversity and the climate emergency.

A decision for society

Dominic Gardner is tenant farmer of Lee Farm, Angmering Park, and chair of the West Sussex NFU branch.

He describes land management as the 'biggest single issue' facing farming today and says we must decide how we want our land to be used. "Those are all things society has to decide jointly, it is not just a decision for farmers," says Dominic. "It is not just a decision of government. It is a joint decision."

He believes it is crucial we do not export our environmental impact. "This year is the biggest year for deforestation in the Amazon," he says. "That's because the price of cereals and soya and everything has gone through the roof. So there's this massive incentive to impact those really vulnerable environments that are providing some really important ecosystem services for the world. At the same time, we're taking land that will have little biodiversity uplift out of production."

Dominic says farmers are committed to tackling the climate crisis on a global scale because they experience its impact first hand.

"For a lot of people it means a couple of extra days on the beach. For us it is the difference between profit and loss."

Regenerative farming

Jason Lavender is a director for the High Weald AONB Partnership and advocates for regenerative farming models.

He believes the key challenges facing farming are climate change, food security, loss of wildlife, water resources and energy demand – many of which intertwine.

There is also what he describes as the 'deep seated and constantly repeated' narrative that small is inefficient and the denigration of agriculture, particularly livestock farming. Jason believes regenerative farming has a fundamental role to play in addressing many of these issues.

"A teaspoon of healthy soil can hold as much life in it as people on the planet," he says. "We tend to almost exclusively focus on the above-ground biodiversity and totally ignore the below-ground biodiversity. So I think a more general focus on soil health through all sectors of society and not just in farming is a really positive and welcome move. You then get those ancillary benefits healthy soil can provide. For example, in terms of the soil water cycle and how it can hold water. Water releases more gradually if you've got better quality, healthy soil."

Uncertainty over new schemes

Derek Crush has been a tenant farmer at Daylands Farm on the Wiston Estate for more than 30 years. Last year, he became CPRE Sussex's first Hedgerow Champion.

When we spoke it was still unclear how the government's new Environmental Land Management scheme would work in practice for farmers (and more recently the actual future of the scheme has become uncertain).



Derek Crush, Daylands farm, Wiston Estate

This uncertainty meant Derek reapplied for his existing environmental scheme so Daylands Farm could continue to be used as an educational site.

"We have been doing all along what they now think they want us to do," he said.

"It is a matter of carrying on what we do, although I'm not sure if we'll get funding for things we have already started."

This uncertainty highlights another key issue for farmers – changing policies, often set by those without practical experience.

Jason believes long-term support for whole-system changes is key to meeting this challenge. "I think a lot of the critics of farming seem to believe it's very easy to move from one system to another but these things take time," he says.

Dominic agrees we need to look at system-wide change. "With the environment it's probably lots of relatively small changes that will actually cure the problem," he said. "It's probably not grandiose projects that people enjoy cutting a tape and declaring open. It's making every acre, every hectare, every area as productive as it can be while protecting the environment."

Rising food prices

The need to balance environmental needs with productivity has become increasingly apparent as food production prices rise.

Derek believes beef could soon be 'a luxury item'. However, Daylands Farm is 'well set up to weather the storm'.

"We sell vegetables and cut flowers and most of our meat is sold privately to go into people's freezers," he says.

While Derek's customers are local, many consumers have lost an appreciation for seasonality – leading to increased imports and a higher environmental impact.

"There was nothing more exciting when I was a kid, than going to the pick-your-own strawberry place and making strawberry jam because we've been waiting all year for them," says Dominic. "Quite often producing something seasonally means the lowest environmental impact, because we're working with nature, not against nature. But the market demands us to try to produce things out of season because that's always where the biggest margin is. It's an interesting correlation between the customer at the start of the process and the environmental impact at the other end."

Working together and sharing knowledge

If we are going to overcome the challenges facing farming today we all need to accept responsibility for the decisions of the past and work together to move forward.

"The countryside is a reflection of government policy over many generations," says Dominic. "So that responsibility for what we see out there is society's responsibility, because society elected the government that gave the policy that changed the countryside."

Jason would like to see a move away from the 'very polemic debate' which currently surrounds farming methods. "It's all about blaming people for their past practices without actually understanding the sort of corners a lot of farmers were painted into," he says. "In the 50s and 60s it was all about chemicals and pesticides and there was this concept of 'get big or get out' and that small or mixed farming was inefficient. "It pushed farmers into a direction they didn't necessarily want to go."

Instead of criticising farmers for past practices and pitting different methods against each other, Jason and Dominic would like to see a collaborative approach. As well as working for the High Weald AONB partnership, Jason, along with full-time farmer Sam Newington, runs an organic farm which has moved to a regenerative holistic planned grazing system.

The farm is used as a demonstration site for farmers and policymakers.

"I think we should be trying to build bridges rather than walls and recognise that things have changed, things could have perhaps been done in a different way in the past and ask how we help each other," says Jason.

Dominic is a member of the Arun to Adur Cluster Group. Originally funded by the government, it is now self-funded by farmers who work together to improve the natural environment.

A recent project saw 400 wild bird feeders placed on members' land.



Jason Lavender, director for the High Weald AONB Partnership

What can we do?

If we are to tackle the challenges of food security and climate change we all have to work together.

This will mean living differently and not always as we would choose – whether it is the products we buy or the holidays we take.

Every industry must play its part – we cannot rely on farming alone to offset carbon emissions.

“We have to ask ourselves some pretty devastating questions about where our environmental profile lies as individuals and how much of what we’re doing to improve ourselves is effectively trying to greenwash our own impact and make ourselves feel better,” says Dominic.

“It is everybody’s responsibility because the farming industry accepts we have a serious problem out there that we need to address. And we can only do it all working together.”

Please ensure your MP is backing nature

The EU’s common agricultural policy (CAP) was due to be replaced by a forward-thinking scheme that encourages paying farmers for “public goods” - creating habitats for wildlife, preserving biodiversity, improving soils and growing food. We and many other organisations supported this ‘Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM)’ to improve our environment and ensure that smaller farmers did not lose out to agribusiness.

In September it was returned for review. We have expressed alarm to our MPs. Farming policies that protect the diversity of farms and our countryside are vital. Help us continue to press for the ELM scheme in the coming months.

Roadside Flint Walls

by Robert Cheeseman, South Downs Society member and Chairman (retired) of the Friends of Lewes

For more than 100 years in rural Sussex flint walls have been built to separate the highway from the adjoining fields. They look good, use local materials and enhance the rural scene. Proper maintenance requires specialist skills. However, in recent years a lack of maintenance has caused the walls’ rapid deterioration, particularly if they are damaged in road traffic accidents.

A good example is the wall on the north-west side of the road to Ringmer (the B2192) from the Earwig Corner junction in Lewes. This was built in the 1830s shortly after this road was constructed to avoid a hill in the original route. This flint wall serves both as the boundary of the roadside pathway and as a retaining wall since the field on the other side is at a much lower level.

The wall was built by the Turnpike Trust and is now owned by the highway authority, East Sussex County Council, which inherited it from the Trust. The wall was well maintained, presumably by the county council lengths-men, until just after WWII when maintenance was abandoned. At some point brick supporting buttresses were provided but they have not been maintained either.

Over the years, a lot of the damage to the wall has been caused by ignoring the necessary maintenance, such as replacing flints or coping stones that fall, which eventually lead to it collapsing into the adjoining field. When safety has been compromised, the county council have simply erected scaffolding poles or safety

fencing rather than undertaking reinstatements. The pictures above clearly shows the safety fencing is unsightly, an eyesore on a road that is in the South Downs National Park.

Against this background we are delighted that the new section of flint walling provided on the nearby west side of the A26, as part of the recently completed Earwig Corner improvements, was well done, despite the coping being done in concrete instead of the traditional coping stones, proof the skills still exist.

If the county council consider reinstatement of the B2192 wall is not economically justified, what ought to be done? They have responsibility for safety so would more funding persuade them to undertake the task? The wall is in the South Downs National Park, would the Park Authority be prepared to contribute? Are parish councils, landowners and amenity bodies willing?

If they are, it could be properly repaired and could become a precedent for the repair of other roadside flint walls in Sussex.

In the interest of conserving our countryside and its tradition of having roadside flint walls do please let us know if you’d support this and we’ll move forward on it.
We look forward to hearing your views. Contact us at: info@cpresussex.org.uk



The countryside on your doorstep

With contributions from Vivienne Barton and James Newmarch, Brighton & Hove tree champions.

CPRE Sussex may be best known for protecting and promoting the countryside but we're also passionate about greening up our towns and cities.

The Covid pandemic has made us all realise how much trees, urban green spaces and the countryside on our doorsteps matter. They connect us with nature, are places where we can seek respite from everyday life, and boost our physical and mental health.

CPRE Sussex can advise on protecting green spaces you value with a Local Green Space designation and trees with Tree Preservation Orders. In our more urban areas we've been working with residents and local councils, driving forward tree planting in green spaces and on city streets, as well as promoting and protecting the surrounding countryside.

If you live in town – look around you!

Now imagine your town or city without the thousands of trees growing in our parks, green spaces, streets and gardens.

We value trees instinctively for their beauty, as wildlife habitat, as landmarks where we congregate and meet. Planting trees in the right place cleanses our air, reduces carbon, provides shelter and shade, reduces soil erosion, helps with flood prevention, and shields us from noise. They also, importantly, improve the health of our hearts and our sense of wellbeing.

The 'Economics of Biodiversity' report (see reference, page 12) suggests an economic value should be attached to trees reflecting the ecosystem services (what nature does for us for free) they provide. Forest Research's 'Street trees valuation systems' publication sets out methods for valuing trees. This lets decision-makers factor in a tree's true value in proposed developments and seek proper compensation or new tree planting if trees are lost.

So, we can now add the monetary value of trees to their health, emotional and cultural benefits. For example, many of the City of Brighton's mature elms are worth more than £100,000 each and property values in towns are typically higher where there are trees.

In our climate emergency, we can all help to offset our carbon footprint by planting trees to capture carbon – the more trees the better! But they must be the right species for each place so they grow well, creating a leafy legacy for future generations. Local businesses, residents groups and individuals can all play their part – so let's have a tree planting revolution in Sussex!

If you'd like to bring the benefits of green spaces and trees to your community, in town or countryside, CPRE Sussex may be able to help. If you want to protect your local green space or a special tree, or to plant trees, see our website at: www.cpresussex.org.uk or contact us at: info@cpresussex.org.uk

Interested in volunteering?

Join us as a Trustee

We are looking for new, hands-on, Trustees. To continue to meet the many challenges facing the Sussex countryside, its precious green spaces and communities, we must strengthen and broaden our Board of Trustees.

By volunteering with us you'll be helping to find positive answers for the issues facing the countryside and the environment. By applying your knowledge, skills and experience you can make a positive contribution and play a central part in a forward-looking, friendly and passionate charity.

As a Trustee you'll contribute towards making decisions and have the opportunity to actively work towards protecting and promoting the

countryside, develop our charity in line with our strategy and policy, and ensure our compliance with governance regulations.

We need:

- a Trustee with legal and/or human resources experience to provide expertise and support to the charity and support staff on governance and policy issues
- a Trustee with experience of fundraising and developing partnerships, including managing relationships with Trusts and Foundations
- a Trustee with planning knowledge and expertise
- a Trustee with knowledge of land matters and management

Become our Tours Programme Organiser/Co-ordinator

If you would like to help us ensure Sussex has greener future we would very much like to hear from you.

This is a wonderful role and we are seeking a volunteer(s), working with our office team, to create and lead a small programme of visits for our members to enjoy next year.

Our members have enjoyed a wide range of visits from beautiful gardens to a water treatment works and a nuclear bunker hidden in the countryside! If you love exploring Sussex, getting out and about and meeting people, we'd love to hear from you.



Derek Crush and family at Daylands Farm

If you are interested and would like to find out more email: lesley.wilson@cpresussex.org.uk

Job opportunity

We are looking for a freelance fundraiser

Join our small office team to help us increase our ability to protect and enhance the countryside. We are keen to hear from you if you share our passion, enjoy engaging with a wide variety of people, and have excellent written communication skills. Experience of fundraising for a charity is a bonus.

Flexible working arrangements, from home or office, ideally the equivalent of 2 days a week. The salary is negotiable.

If you are interested and would like to find out more, please email

lesley.wilson@cpresussex.org.uk

Dates for your Diary

Please check our website for up-coming events. You'll find and be able to book a place for our Walks, Spring Talks, the next Country Matters Book Club and the Mayors Charities events at: www.cpresussex.org.uk/get-involved/events/

Donate to CPRE Sussex – at no cost to you!

You can help support CPRE Sussex when you're online shopping. If you sign up for Easyfundraising before shopping online you can raise funds to protect the countryside. Easyfundraising are partners with more than 7000 brands who will donate part of what you spend to us. It won't cost you anything extra and there are no catches!

Find out more and sign up at:

www.cpresussex.org.uk/get-involved/donate-via-online-shopping/

Now we are 50, we are looking forward to our next half-century shaping a greener future for Sussex



The countryside charity
Sussex