



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

ISLE OF WIGHT

NEWSLETTER

Issue No 7, March 2010

The **CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND** exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

The **ISLE OF WIGHT BRANCH OF CPRE** is a separate registered charity governed by a committee of Trustees elected by the membership. An advisory Steering Committee comprises trustees and other coopted members, together with a number of delegates (who are usually also CPRE members) from other organisations. According to the Constitution of the Isle of Wight Branch,

The objects of the Branch shall be to promote and encourage for the benefit of the public the improvement, protection and preservation of the countryside of the Isle of Wight and its towns and villages and the better development of the rural environment.

Branch trustees elected at the AGM of 16 May 2009:

President	Dr Paul Hooper
Chairman	Mr John Langley
Vice-Chairman	Mr John Power
Honorary Treasurer	Mr Ronald Scotchbrook
Honorary Secretary	Mrs Joan Biggs
Trustee	Mrs Jill Green
Trustee	Mr John Pretty
Trustee	Professor Dennis Russell

The official address of the Branch is:

Campaign to Protect Rural England (Isle of Wight Branch)
c/o Barclays Bank, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1UR.

Registered Charity Number: 215033

NOTES FROM A NEW CHAIRMAN by John Langley

Coming in as the new Chairman of our Branch, I am aware that I have a hard task ahead of me. Not least, I shall have to follow in the footsteps of our previous Chairman, Prof Dennis Russell, who has bequeathed me the job of helping to look after the Island and its environment, and who has worked so diligently throughout his seven years of service.

Firstly, there are several outstanding issues that will need careful attention over the next year or so. We must continue to build a partnership with the IW Council Planning Department on matters that concern us all, such as wind farms, unseemly development of property and the encroachment of the dark skies of the Island.

Our team will encourage the planners to consider the overall image of our Island when they are requested to let yet more out-of-keeping projects loose within our shores. At our last AGM in May 2009, Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive of CPRE, said that he had been greatly impressed with the Island – it was his first visit here – and noted that unlike some other Branches, we were more positive in our outlook. Although we entertained a certain amount of *NIMBY*ism, it was done constructively and fairly. He also showed concern about our very small membership. We have just over 160 people signed up out of a population of some 130,000.

This brings me to my second point. Enclosed with this newsletter is an application form for new members. Please do not discard it, but use it to actively recruit a new member this year. More members mean more funding for our Branch and support from National Office. More members also result in the ability to have new faces around the Committee table. Existing Committee members are steadily sliding along the perch of life year by year and unless we obtain new people, the time will come when the cage is empty!

My third point concerns the fight against litter. We are actively encouraging youth groups' litter-picking activities by giving out financial awards toward their favourite charities. Over the last year several hundred pounds have been given by CPRE to youngsters who learn how to look after the environment. I am presently in communication with the IW Council about incidences of fly tipping in the countryside. You personally can help here. Should you find any evidence of illegal dumping of unsightly rubbish in roadside ditches, in woodland areas or indeed anywhere that it should not be left, please let me

know what it is, where it has happened, and if possible provide a photograph of it as evidence. I will then annoy the powers that be to get something done. I have already begun a dialogue with the Environment section of the Council, so please support me on this vital matter.

Fourthly, in conjunction with Vectis Astronomical Society (VAS), I would like to have CPRE working towards the establishment of a new Dark Skies County Park. These already exist in Scotland. This would help protect our largest AONB from insidious light pollution. It will take time but work is already in hand with VAS measuring the quality of our dark skies throughout the Island.

Finally, not enough play and too much work is reputed to turn Jack into a dull boy. We should try to introduce more social events during the year where we can get together in more relaxed circumstances just to stand and stare and even taste the coffee! The 'P' in CPRE stands for 'Protection' as we all know. But protection in itself is not the whole picture. The great public out there have little idea of who we are and what we do, I fear. Let us consider a new word beginning with 'P': **Campaign for the 'Promotion' of Rural England** has quite a ring to it, does it not?

PS. Shaun Spiers was so taken with the beauty of our County on his very first visit, that he brought his family down here on holiday for a week soon after our meeting, and was investigating subsequent excursions.



Shaun in serious mode, and relaxing at Steephill Cove.

CPRE's 2026 VISION

For our principal guest at our last AGM, at the Ventnor Botanic Gardens on Saturday 16 May 2009, we were delighted to welcome the *CPRE Chief Executive Shaun Spiers*. After his stirring illustrated talk to us, he sent us the text of some of his comments which appeared in *The Countryman*:

CPRE's new vision for the countryside sets out how we want things to be in 2026, our centenary year. The vision positively oozes with optimism. We envisage a countryside that is more beautiful, more varied and more tranquil than it is now. And this can really happen, if we take the right decisions now! There are plenty of hopeful examples of a better future already being created.

Take light pollution, theme of CPRE's Night Blight campaign a few years ago. Our vision is that in 2026 "there is less light pollution across the country, thanks to better designed and less energy-hungry lighting. Truly dark skies provide breathtaking views of the stars and planets."

This is eminently achievable. Light pollution is now a statutory nuisance. Growing concerns about carbon emissions and the need to conserve energy are also helping. Low sodium, orange glow lighting is being steadily replaced by full cut-off, flat-glass lighting. Surrey County Council is doing this all in one go. The Campaign for Dark Skies is talking to the Highways Agency about replacing all of its lighting. And there are perhaps a hundred street light 'switch off' schemes across the country.

Last month I attended the presentation of our Isle of Wight branch's Good Lighting Awards, established using a recent legacy. The Island has some of the darkest skies in the south of England and our branch is determined to make them even darker. Ironically the winner of the award, Wight Salads Group, came to the notice of the judges "one very windy night when the heavens were blasted by a surge of light that could have come from the film Close Encounters of the Third Kind". A roof shading from a glasshouse had been ripped away, releasing into the night sky one megawatt of lighting power – equivalent to about 4,000 domestic security lights. The panel was quickly replaced, but without that accident the branch would not have even known that these brightly lit glasshouses were there.

That was my first visit to the Isle of Wight and I liked it so much that I am going back on holiday in a couple of weeks. I hope to see plenty of stars and lots of red squirrels, and to take some long walks in beautiful and (relatively) tranquil countryside. I know the branch has plenty of battles on its hands, but from my London perspective, this will be my 2026 experience a few years early.

The in-house CPRE publication *Fieldwork* said recently: The countryside faces daunting challenges: development pressures made more severe by a weakened planning system; changes to agricultural markets and subsidy regimes; climate change. All within a culture increasingly disengaged from the natural world and where a visceral identification with rural England can be expected from fewer and fewer politicians and opinion-formers. CPRE does not claim to have all the answers, but we hope our 2026 vision will attract support and provoke debate. The Vision, if it becomes a reality, is encapsulated in the document's sections:

Changing attitudes: There will be a new focus on quality of life, embracing beauty, local character and the enjoyment of green, open spaces.

Better planning: Successful urban regeneration will have been crucial in protecting the countryside. Quality of life and environmental protection will be given serious weight within the system, with most decisions on land use taken locally. A reinvented, democratic planning system will be achieved.

New life in the countryside: There will be improved access to services, so that people do not have to travel long distances to meet basic needs. The countryside will be recognised for the health and spiritual benefits it has to offer. People will walk and cycle more, and there will be a revival of rural railways.

Food and farming: England's farmers will be valued once more for the food they produce, but also for doing a superb job of conserving the familiar, beautiful patchwork of landscapes we love. High quality agricultural land will be protected from development, and a national soil strategy will be in place.

Changing landscapes: There will be more woodland and wetlands, rich in wildlife, with some remote upland areas deliberately left to nature, to become wild in character. There will be less energy-hungry lighting and truly dark skies.

Green energy: People and wildlife will adapt to climate change, with rural buildings more energy-efficient and with small-scale renewables. The land will be managed to reduce emissions and prevent the flooding of houses.

A virtuous circle: The planning system will recognise the importance of a finite countryside, in tandem with well-planned development that can improve and beautify rural areas, to be enjoyed by all as a huge national asset.

The last word goes to ***CPRE President Bill Bryson:*** *It is inexpressibly vital that we carefully manage and enhance a landscape that is so dangerously finite. A healthy farming industry, a 'greener' Green Belt, and planning decisions that take environmental, social and climate change into account are critical ambitions for our countryside.*



The Thornton Millennium Trophy

CPRE-IW will be adding another award to its stable. The Thornton Millennium Trophy was given on the occasion of the millennium by Robin Thornton, then of Old Park, St Lawrence and chairman of the Undercliff Society. It was to be *“awarded annually by the Undercliff Society to the property judged by the committee to have contributed most to the visual enhancement of the area”*. It is permanently fixed to the wall inside St Lawrence Village Hall and consists of an attractive piece of wood with a central declaratory plaque, a small specifically engraved shield being attached on each award. The wood “came from a yew tree planted in Old Park circa 1880 and destroyed by the hurricane of 1987”. Sadly but faced with an impossible lack of volunteer officers, the Undercliff Society dissolved itself in 2009, and the then CPRE-IW Chairman Prof Dennis Russell kindly offered to take over responsibility for the trophy.

There is no financial commitment involved as currently formulated, and the criteria for award have previously been interpreted widely (with the donor's approval). Awards so far have been

Year	Development	Individual(s)
2000	Home Farm, St Lawrence	Mr & Mrs Scoccia
2001	St Lawrence Village Hall	
2002	Ventnor Botanic Garden	
2003	Undercliff Drive	Buster Bartlett
2004	Ventnor Cricket Academy	
2005	Algernon House, Alpine Road	
2006	St Lawrence Cottage	Mr & Mrs P Noble
2007	Spring Hill Garden	Janet Nettleton
2008	[no award]	
2009	St Lawrence Peace Garden	David Trevan & Jill Fothergill

WHY PRESERVE THE COUNTRYSIDE?

by John Power

This column usually ruminates on Planning on the Island. Planning is a subject which strikes gloom into the hearts of many - one might even say most - because, like Democracy and Government it is an inefficient and imprecise solution to the problem of preserving the beauty of the countryside, but the only one available to us. This time I had intended to ramble on about the Core Strategy which is in process of formulation and adoption by the IWC, and the Policies contained in it. I already had half an idea that my readers would give up after the first paragraph and move on to something more exciting. Morosely, I wondered why people join CPRE to read stuff they don't want to read, and why other people spend a lot of their time trying, often fruitlessly, to prevent obviously unattractive and unsuitable development on our Island and then sitting down to write stuff about it which few will read.

At the time, I was reading *Russia*, by Jonathan Dimbleby, a book on a fascinating subject which I would recommend anyone to read, whether or not he has an interest in it, because he will soon find he does and cannot put it down. I read about Jonathan's visit to Yasnya Polyana, the estate south of Moscow where the Tolstoy family lived and amazingly still live, now owned by the State but occupied by the current Count Tolstoy and his family. I came across these paragraphs which so aptly, movingly and elegantly explain why we value the English countryside that I immediately decided I must share them with you.

I am easily rapt when I watch cows grazing, and delight in the slurp as they wrap roughened tongues around tufts of grass. When a herd lies in a semi-circle, a conclave of ruminants, regurgitating the wet strands of nutrient from stomach to mouth and back to stomach again - chewing the cud - I allow myself the indulgence that they are "contented", and, as if by osmosis, I experience that emotion myself. When a ewe strains in labour until the lamb's head finally appears, smeared in mucus and blood, and slithers suddenly on to the straw, and the mother rises at once to lick clean the nostrils and the mouth of her offspring, clearing away the detritus of her own afterbirth, nudging, nuzzling and nickering, until the frail, wet creature shudders into life, I never lose the sense of wonder at that long, tremulous moment until the lamb takes breath and struggles towards the mother's teat. But I like to think that sentiment is not false. If I delight as a suckling lamb twitches its tail with pleasure, I have also

delivered the rotting carcass of a dead lamb from the putrid womb of a dying ewe. If I wonder at the new-born calf, half-buried in straw, steam rising from its flanks as its dam rasps at its wet head, warming and drying with her tongue, I do not forget that the new-born creature is destined for the slaughterhouse, for a moment of final terror before it is hung, drawn and quartered for human consumption. Farming is about life and death, beginnings and endings.

I am aware that it might seem absurd, but as I grapple to understand the emotions that a ripe cornfield or a herd of cows or even a tractor on the skyline provoke in me, I can find no better - or more honest - term than "love". Of course, it is not that intensity of feeling that one human being may have for another in the first flush of passion, or later when the fear of loss and the promise of grief overshadow every shared moment. You do not love a place on the map in the same way that you love a person - or, rather, if you think you do, you are either deficient or deluded. But if you have ever caught your breath at the natural world, if you have ached to be by a favourite stream or meadow, or grieved at the violation of a forest or copse to make way for an airport or housing estate or bypass, if your heart soars when you see a hawk hovering or a skylark on the wing, if the bark of a fox or scream of an owl stops you in your tracks, if you are mesmerised by a hoar frost or falling snow, if the moan of a high wind or the muttering from a thundercloud fills you with awe, then you will understand that the term "love" in relation to rural England is not as ludicrous as it might at first appear. So, though I do not possess a minute fraction of his genius, I have the temerity to recognize in Tolstoy a kindred spirit, but one blessed with a unique ability both to explore far more profoundly and to express far more vividly than the rest of us can ever hope to emulate those imprecise emotions and longings that the natural world - ordered by hard labour and good husbandry - still arouse in all but the benumbed and benighted. Anyway, I felt at home in Yasnaya Polyana.

I found my eyes filling with tears as I read these words, as not only are they expressed in beautiful English, but they put into words the barely-formed and unspoken thoughts and emotions of so many of us. Jonathan Dimbleby is a past President and now a Vice-President of CPRE. His words should be required reading by all members of Planning and Development Control Committees throughout the land.

Russia, by Jonathan Dimbleby, was published in 2008 by BBC Books, ISBN no. 978 0 563 539 12 4

CPRE-IW Luncheon Picture-book

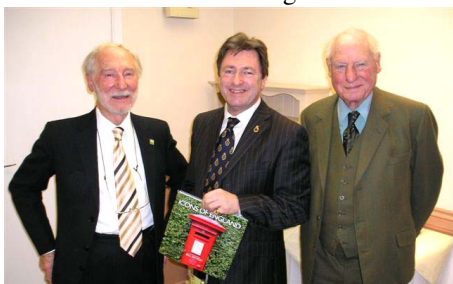
IW College 5 Feb 2009: guest Alan Titchmarsh MBE, IW High Sheriff



Peter Keevil and High Sheriff



High Sheriff and President



Chairman, High Sheriff, President



Alan Titchmarsh signs for the Scotchbrooks



Ann Langley



John Langley

Val Gwynn



CPRE-IW Luncheon Picture-book

IW College 9 Feb 2010: guest Mrs Gay Edwards, High Sheriff



President and High Sheriff



High Sheriff and Chairman



Lucie Le Cheminant



Gay Edwards



Ken Lambert



Joy and Julian Russell



Linda & Ron Scotchbrook, Elizabeth Hooper

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE ISLAND'S HERITAGE

by David Burdett

In the autumn of 2006 the Isle of Wight Society agreed to support a bid, led by the Portsmouth Society, for historic Portsmouth and its surroundings to become a World Heritage Site. A steering Group was established and a series of meetings was held to discuss how to proceed.

World Heritage Site status is conferred by the International Committee on Monuments (ICOMOS), a committee of UNESCO. Each year national governments submit proposals to ICOMOS for approval. Organisations within each country submit their proposals to be added to their national list and from this list the government chooses which bids to put forward to ICOMOS.

Within England there are already mechanisms in place to protect our heritage, monuments, buildings and structures, from natural degradation and commercial development. English Heritage maintains a list of "Listed Buildings" that are specially protected from alteration and also a register of "Buildings at Risk". In addition, local authorities define specific areas as "Conservation Areas" where the character of an area is considered to be worth protecting. Development does take place within Conservation Areas but planning applications for properties within these areas undergo critical assessment.

The Bid to have an area designated as a World Heritage Site is aimed at alerting the local and global community that a location has preserved historical buildings and structures that are especially important – more important than usual, normally because they tell a specific story in human development. The hope of all organisations promoting these bids is for an increase in financial support, both locally and through increased visitor numbers, in order to properly preserve and maintain the historical record. It is also hoped that the community itself will benefit through increased business activity and prosper to ensure the financial strength of those organisations caring for our heritage.

The Steering Group supporting the Solent bid was made up of the Conservation Officers of the five Local Authorities covering the area as well as the majority of the local amenity and historic societies. There were representatives of other organisations with specific interests such as The Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology and the Solent Protection Society. The Chief Executive of the Portsmouth Navy Base Property Trust chaired the meetings. The Steering Group decided that the Bid should be for the waters of Portsmouth Harbour and Spithead, with a surrounding buffer zone extending to include the northeast coast of the Isle of Wight from Fishbourne Creek to Bembridge Ledge.

A public meeting held in Ryde in February 2009 produced little opposition to the idea but much debate about the extent of the Island to be included. Following the Steering Group's suggested theme of " An historical seascape - two thousand years of a defended military base", Islanders felt that structures such as Island forts covering the Western Solent should also be included – the Island had fed the fleet when it was anchored off Bembridge during Napoleonic times.

At this stage debate about the Bid slowed. In 2008 the government Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), stated that it wanted to review the way Bids were put forward in England. In the past several organisations had put a lot of effort and finance into preparing a bid only to have it turned down in favour of others. Throughout the country organisations are still waiting for the government to decide how the process should work. In the meantime the Steering Group had heard how Liverpool's World Heritage Site was progressing. Although the WHS designation is not officially part of the planning legislation, each site must have a management plan and some organisation to ensure that the aim of the plan is implemented. Liverpool's answer has been to create a Supplementary Planning Guidance Document.

When the Island's MP was asked for his opinion as to whether this would be the way forward for the Portsmouth Bid, his personal opinion was that it would not. The creation of a legal document, especially one that needed the agreement of the politicians of all five Local Authorities, would take a very long time to create and cost a great deal of money. His point is that it is the efforts of local enthusiasts that matter, not pieces of paper. Supplementary Planning Guidance would be worthless unless there are people working to make it effective.

As an Island resident, an officer of the Isle of Wight Society and a founder member of the East Cowes Heritage Centre, I have long felt that the story contained in the history and heritage of the Island has not been told in a unified way. The Island Council, English Heritage, the National Trust, local voluntary specialist organisations, private individuals and numerous authors have done a lot of work independently of each other. Publicity for the Island has been mainly carried out by the Tourism bodies that only promote those organisations who can pay for the service. I now feel that, instead of expending further energy on a bid for World Heritage Site status, on the Island we would be better off, not reinventing the wheel, but using all the work that has already been done by establishing a small organisation that will draw all the information together and market it as a complete story about the history of the Island starting with the record of our ancestors of thousands of years ago to the time when the Island helped to launch our nation's only successful space vehicle.

DAVE GREEN 3 March 1939 – 28 September 2008

Dave, the husband of our long-time CPRE Trustee and well-known long-distance walker Jill Green, died while leading a walk in North London countryside at the same time that Jill was leading a walk on the Island.

Dave was the Wight Nature Fund (WNF) Warden for Bretts Meadow and Youngwoods Copse at Alverstone, and volunteered for this position when he retired. Youngwoods Copse is managed in order to make the wood an interesting place for people, as well as a good habitat for wild flora and fauna, and Dave carried out the necessary maintenance with enthusiasm and energy.

He was responsible for two kissing-gates being built with money left to the WNF for this wood, in memory of Angela Gould – a photograph below shows Dave at this gate together with Richard Grogan, the Island representative for the Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust. Also he installed a new seat in the woodland glade on behalf of the Ramblers Association, in memory of Barbara Aze, and an Interpretation Board funded by our local AONB Partnership.

The AONB also helped Wight Nature Fund through Dave's work to fence Bretts Meadow for the necessary grazing of this wetland site. Dave planted hazel trees with the help of Wight Wildlife and regularly maintained them, clearing the encroaching brambles and bracken.

Dave and Jill together organised many walks to raise awareness of the plants and animals in this Nature Reserve, and to publicise the work of WNF. We note that when Jill asked for donations instead of flowers, almost £2000 was given to WNF in his memory, which will help to fund more work that he was in the process of organising. The committee of the WNF are very grateful for Dave's invaluable contributions and he will be sadly missed.



A YOUNGWOODS COPSE DIARY -- Jill Green

[Jill has been monitoring red squirrels in Youngwoods Copse, Alverstone, for the Wight Squirrel Project. We thought that these recent extracts from her February diary would help to remind us why we are members of CPRE]

February 7th, 2010. My first Squirrel Walk for the Wight Squirrel Project.

I arrived at 7.30am. A Great Spotted Woodpecker was making an amazing noise in the otherwise quiet wood. A skein of Wild Geese flew overhead, the morning light on their undersides making them look unusually beautiful. Little Jenny Wrens were very busy in the holly bushes.

I sat on the bench, put up in memory of my friend Barbara Aze, to drink a flask of warm tea. Standing about makes me cold – I remember that's why I don't go bird-watching. One squirrel, absolutely silent, so agile up in the branches of the tall oaks, was very busy going somewhere purposefully.

My peace was shattered by two uncontrolled dogs. I told the owner what I was doing with the Wight Squirrel Project, but she showed no interest.

February 12th, 2010. A cold, dull morning, the ground is frozen rock hard.

I start at 7.10am. I see my first squirrel on my walk in. Two woodpeckers today – only one making all the noise. Jays and pigeons making a noise, flapping about. A really strong smell of fox. Then I see a large fox cross my path with a rabbit. Second squirrel, again high up in the oak trees.

I sit on the bench to drink my tea and, very soon, I have three dog walkers with seven dogs – six Golden Retrievers and one Labrador. My Training Instructions say avoid dog disturbance, but it is impossible in this wood. They are friendly people and dogs.

Third squirrel at the end of the wood, going towards the meadow. This surprised me because it had started to rain, not heavy, but cold and unpleasant.

February 23rd, 2010. It has rained almost continuously for two days and nights.

I start at 7.00am prompt. The wood is full of bird song and the catkins are out. The paths are muddy and I can hear the stream running fast. It only does this after lots of rain. I am nearing the end of my survey when I see a squirrel high up in the branches, 75 metres away. It is using its tail to balance as the branches it is traversing are so small.

At the end of my walk I spot another squirrel, wonderfully camouflaged, looking like a bump on an oak branch. It is motionless for four minutes, then I move a little and it immediately moves and we face each other for another minute. Then I move slowly away. No woodpeckers, no people, no dogs this morning. It started to rain again, quite hard, as I walked home. I have enjoyed doing this monitoring and will do it again in October.

EDITOR'S JOTTINGS (Dennis Russell)

In the words of John Major's Spitting Image puppet, "Yes, I'm still here". But I have to apologise for the long gap since the last Newsletter. Members who were at our last AGM may remember that in presenting my Planning Report I estimated that I had written 826 letters to the IW Council during my seven years as Chairman. I now think that this referred only to specific planning applications, and that the overall total may be quite a few more. However, this work is ongoing in my role as Planning Secretary, with valiant assistance from John Power and Laurence Coates, who diligently monitor and filter for comment the 40 or so new applications that come in every week. So if there is anyone out there who fancies a literary occupation, please come and *volunteer to be Newsletter Editor* – we have a dedicated colour laser printer and technical assistant Nick Berryman who will produce the final copies, so it means collecting contributions and making up the pages for printing.

When I stepped down as Chairman last year, the branch kindly presented me with a splendid William Westall 1836 engraving of Alum Bay and the Needles. It shows the gap where the tall rock column that gave the rocks their name stood until collapsing in 1764, but the lighthouse at sea level is absent, being constructed only in 1859. It was my favourite excursion as a schoolboy, to go to Alum Bay with a friend on bicycles with our sandwiches, scrambling down the track to the beach, and it was then still reminiscent of the description in Stevens Directory of 1883 that "A pleasant stroll can be enjoyed on the romantic cliffs, which in the summer are covered with heather in full bloom, and the soft nature of the turf makes the walk a pleasant one".

By the time the region was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and then the Tennyson Heritage Coast, there was already an industrial chairlift, and the carpetbaggers from Heritage Attractions Ltd of Liverpool have now transformed the clifftop. A few weeks ago I was taking a visiting musician back to the Yarmouth ferry and he asked if we could divert to view the Needles. Well, the "soft nature of the turf" has gone, to be replaced by the loose grey gravel of the car park, interspersed with earth mounds, stretching over the clifftop from the amusement park as far as the angle in the cliffs, and there is 2-metre high chain link fencing all along the cliff edge. Looking at the Needles through the wire makes one feel like a bird in a large gravelled cage.

So my advice is not to take anyone to Alum Bay who has ever heard of an AONB. To appreciate the magic of this Heritage Coast, to reach the National

Trust Battery site at the tip of the headland, to stand above the imposing Scratchell's Bay cliffs, or to look back at Alum Bay from far enough away, you need to park at, or take a bus to, Freshwater Bay and walk up over Tennyson Down. You need to be fit, of course. Alum Bay's fate is a sad reminder of the failure of past councillors and planners to protect our most iconic landscape.

It could however be worse. John Power has taken the following photograph of the Bodrum peninsula on the Turkish Aegean, which has development sprinkled all over it from top to bottom:



When it comes to development, we always suspect that “some applicants are more equal than others”. A recent David and Goliath struggle has taken place, except that Goliath has won. The expansion of the Sainsbury Supermarket at Newport has planning consent to double-deck their car park (to well above the roof level of the houses on Sylvan Drive opposite) and to put on an extension which requires diversion of an ancient hedge-lined footpath (Petticoat Lane) and the felling of several large trees which soften the ambience of this urban landscape. Newport's traffic system is already in regular gridlock and its one-way systems appear to be the result of constant doodlings on the back of an envelope, so the concept that one can continue to pour in extra traffic for town centre developments seems a rather curious delusion. It is, however, to the credit of the appeal system that the tenacity of Newport Town Councillor Jackie Hawkins was able to trigger a full 3-day Public Inquiry challenging the footpath diversion. The Planning Inspector patiently heard all sides, including the full bench of “expert witnesses” fielded by the large Sainsbury team, but he has now just handed down his decision, which confirms the footpath diversion (and removal of the trees) and allows the development to go ahead.

It is instructive to trawl through the IW Council's planning website to see just where the power lies in the planning system. In 2009 there were 1844 applications advertised. As a general principle, unless cases are "controversial" or unless the local ward councillor insists on a referral to the Planning Committee, they will automatically be determined by planning officers. In 2009 there were 84 such referred cases – although, due to consultation periods and planning lag, these are not all from the ones advertised during the same year, the total advertised gives a convenient rule of thumb, and so the 84 cases brought to the Committee represent a mere 4.5% of the total. While councillors often suggest slight modifications of conditions, in only 10 cases were decisions made which were strictly contrary to officer recommendation, and 10 out of 1844 is 0.5%. The conclusion is that 99.5% of planning decisions are determined in exactly the way decided by planning officers originally.

A joint delegation from CPRE and the IW Society recently met with Planning Deputy Head Phil Salmon to clarify a number of issues. Among these was Enforcement, which has been substantially under-resourced for the last 5 years. However, we are now back to full strength, with a full-time Enforcement Team Leader, a Monitoring & Commencements Officer, three Area Compliance Officers (East, West, Central Wight) and two administrative assistants. There is also a newly-adopted Enforcement Policy, which details the way complaints are prioritised, and the obligations for keeping everyone informed. What is still lacking (and which we have again requested) is treatment of Enforcement on the website in the same way as Planning, namely publication of Enforcement Orders issued and of details of Appeals, and also a resumption of the quarterly Enforcement Reports which used to be made to the Planning Committee.

John Power and I have also met with Education Officers to voice our concerns about the continued renewals of sub-standard temporary and mobile buildings in use for schools. Not only do our school children have the right to be taught in quality surroundings, but they will grow up regarding good design as an optional extra, subject to other expediencies. In the present educational turmoil, we can expect little movement, but in the long term we would like to see some encouragement for well-designed and purpose-built accommodation.

To hear more about our activities and awards, please plan to come to our next ***Annual General Meeting***, which is scheduled for ***Saturday morning 8 May 2010*** at the ***Royal Yacht Squadron***. There will be a separate mailing shortly, as you will have a choice to pay a modest amount if you would like to stay for lunch at the Squadron after the end of the meeting.

Contact details

General enquiries about the operation of CPRE on the Island may be addressed to the

Chairman: Mr John Langley
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Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5JB
Tel: 01983 530296
e-mail: [in process of reorganisation]

The Chairman or Honorary Secretary can normally deal with enquiries, also information and a membership form for prospective CPRE membership applicants. Annual membership (including both National CPRE and the local Branch) costs £29 individually, or £38 joint. This includes issues of the National magazine *Countryside Voice* and half-price entry to over 200 stately homes and gardens; half of the subscription is allocated for operation of the local Branch.

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome, and also feedback on the style and contents of this newsletter. Please post or email any letters or comments to the

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Articles for the newsletter should be in electronic form (typescript in MS Word and illustrations in JPEG) and should be sent to the Editor's email address above.

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