

# CHESHIRE

## VIEWPOINT

SPRING 2019



Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Standing up for your countryside

# CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND CHESHIRE BRANCH

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# CONTENTS

View from the Chair:

Andrew Needham 3

Christmas Celebration 4

The Regional View:

Peter Raynes 5

Fracking Inquiry 7

GM Spatial Framework 8

Membership form 9

Brownfield land 11

Cheshire's Twin Trails 13

Branch AGM 14

District News 15

Woodchurch Hedgelaying 20

# ROYAL CHESHIRE SHOW

Cheshire Branch will again be exhibiting at the Royal Cheshire Show on June 18th and 19th. If you are at the show, do come and say hello - we will be in the Rural Life marquee, located beside the WI marquee.

If you are feeling energetic, why not come and volunteer with us for a couple of hours and tell members of the public what CPRE stands for? You will receive free entry for the show in return for a two hour shift manning the stand alongside at least one other volunteer. If you would like to find out more or take part, please contact Debbie Janney in the Branch Office for more information.



# VIEW FROM THE CHAIR



Many of the current issues facing CPRE Cheshire are general and regional, rather than local. For example:

- **Greater Manchester Spatial Framework:** CPRE Cheshire made a joint response with CPRE Lancashire and Friends of the Peak District, as all three Branches have districts within Greater Manchester. See the article on page 8 for more information.
- **Ambitions of Merseyside City region**
- **Transport for the North**, to whose recent consultation we also submitted a joint response with CPRE Lancashire
- **Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2 Phase 2b:** it is claimed that the latter is strongly linked to the former. The Branch highlighted HS2 and the proposed Handsacre Link at the Cheshire Show last summer (as can be seen in the image above) and I also attended a meeting recently with Transport Secretary Chris Grayling at which I raised this issue.
- **Energy supply, renewables and shale gas:** Jackie Copley represented the 'Rule 6 Party' at a public inquiry in February and March regarding a proposed shale gas exploration in Ellesmere Port. See page 7 for our report.
- **GMSF proposal to be carbon neutral by 2038**
- **Brownfield Land** and our work to protect the countryside by encouraging development on brownfield sites; see page 11.

As you can see from the above, we already work closely with CPRE Lancashire. Our Secretary Debbie is shared with Lancs. Becca, the Editor of this magazine also supports Lancs on website matters etc

We now propose that Jackie Copley, Lancashire's Planning Manager, will be employed part time by Cheshire. As Jackie is a Chartered Town Planner this will be of great help to the Branch in responding to the many consultations which have such a big effect on planning law in the county.

**Andrew Needham, Chairman**

# CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

Thank you to all our members who supported last year's Christmas Celebration. We enjoyed seasonal readings, popular carols and solos from flautist Nicola Gerrard, whose beautiful playing was very well received, followed by refreshments in the Village Hall.

Many thanks to all those involved, particularly our President, Lord Grey, who again invited us to use his Family Chapel; Rev. Philip Robinson, who stepped in at the last minute to lead the service when Rev. John Whitehead was sadly unwell on the day; also to our musicians, the ladies of High Legh Village Hall whose cakes and refreshments were up to their usual high standards; our Chairman, Andrew Needham, for his seasonal address and update on relevant local CPRE issues, and lastly to our Branch Secretary Debbie Janney who organised everything behind the scenes!

Plans are already underway for our 2019 event. If you would like to get involved with organisation or music at the event, please contact us at the Branch Office.





# THE REGIONAL VIEW

CPRE'S NORTH-WEST RE-  
GIONAL GROUP CHAIRMAN  
**PETER RAYNES**

## **It's high time that the Sandstone Ridge's Natural Beauty is recognised**

Last year the Government launched a 25-year plan for the environment and within this a commitment to review the existing Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Any area which achieves this can expect better planning protection, a higher profile for tourism and funding for environmental projects. It is a prize worth campaigning for.

The idea for the AONB designation was first put forward by John Dower in his 1945 Report on Protected Landscapes and National Parks in England and Wales. Dower proposed there was need for protection of certain beautiful landscapes which were unsuitable as national parks owing to their small size and lack of wildness. Dower's recommendation was eventually embodied in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as the AONB designation

There are three AONBs in the North West Region; the Forest of Bowland in Lancashire; the Solway Coast in Cumbria, and Arnsdale & Silverdale, which sits on the Cumbria/Lancashire Border. However, our Cheshire Sandstone ridge, which was originally considered for this status, was not created. Indeed it was the only AONB proposed in the North West that was not included in the Act.

Last year the case for the AONB was again put forward by the Sandstone Ridge Trust. Natural England looks at six criteria for potential AONBs, and it is no surprise that the Sandstone Ridge has been considered before as it meets these so clearly.

The criteria for consideration are:

- landscape quality, where natural or man-made landscape is good quality
- scenic quality, such as striking landforms
- relative wildness, such as distance from housing or having few roads
- relative tranquillity, where natural sounds, such as streams or bird-song, are predominant
- natural heritage features, such as distinctive geology or species and habitat
- cultural heritage, which can include the built environment that makes the area unique, such as archaeological remains or historic parkland

As a popular walking destination for many readers (including indeed the author), listing such features is a simple task, the Sandstone Ridge Hill Forts, Beeston Castle, many dramatic sandstone outcrops, Delamere Forest, Peckforton Castle, Bickerton Hill and many more all linked by a total of 368 miles of footpaths.

I would recommend readers to look at the excellent work being carried out by the Sandstone Ridge Trust, either through their website (<https://www.sandstoneridge.org.uk>) or their postal address: The Sandstone Ridge Trust, Tattenhall Library, Chester Road, Tattenhall, Cheshire, CH3 9AH. Or come along to Cheshire Branch's AGM on May 9th (see page 14) to hear the Chair of the Sandstone Ridge Trust, Professor Andrew Hull, talk in more detail about the special landscape features of the Sandstone Ridge area.





# PORTSIDE NORTH FRACKING INQUIRY

Jackie Copley, Planning Manager for CPRE Lancashire, was commissioned by Frack Free Ellesmere Port and Upton, the Rule 6 Party, to represent opposition to a shale exploration application. The proposal site is situated on Portside North in Ellesmere Port. Although an urban location, it was considered as a matter indirectly relevant to CPRE in that, should the use was allowed, the employment use would be displaced elsewhere and probably require greenfields in countryside to be allocated instead.



Ellesmere Port Frack Free

The Inspector asked “Would a developer/property surveyor consider the proposal site, or other site in the vicinity as a good investment for locating their employment or housing investment if consented as a shale exploration site?” Ms Copley and Mr Plunkett, an economic development expert, agreed that a shale exploration use would definitely have a negative impact on the regeneration ambition of the Council and its development partners. Shale gas exploration would discourage inward development, that would otherwise occur and gross value added associated with new jobs and homes, and this would be contrary to the Local Plan. The Inspector must therefore attribute appropriate weight.

Full details, including the Rule 6 Party submission and links to the write-ups from each day of the Inquiry, can be found on our website. <http://www.cprecheshire.org.uk/news/current-news/item/2325-portside-north-fracking-inquiry>

# GREATER MANCHESTER SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

CPRE is delighted that Greater Manchester Combined Authority, led by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, has listened to us, and 27,000 consultees, the vast majority (93%) of whom strongly opposed the large scale of Green Belt release proposed in the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, and consequently, the amount of Green Belt proposed for development in the Revised Draft GMSF has been halved.

The net amount of Green Belt land proposed for release is 2,419 hectares - this means a 4.1% reduction in the size of the Green Belt compared to 4,900 hectares or 8.2% in 2016. New areas of Green Belt have been proposed. This is, undeniably, a great outcome for CPRE and the public. That said, we hope to reduce further the amount of Green Belt land lost to unnecessary development by challenging the ambitious growth rate assumed for jobs (with donations from Greater Manchester groups we have commissioned an economic study) and housing (we previously commissioned a demographer to show less housing was needed), and we will respond accordingly, and encourage people to reiterate reasoned planning arguments to minimise Green Belt development, and increase the reuse of brownfield land.

There is now a 'brownfield preference' at the heart of the Revised Draft GMSF, with 87% of housing, 95% of offices and 50% of industrial and warehousing development within the urban area because public pressure on persuaded GMCA to refocus the spatial plan on a more brownfield first approach. By contrast, the earlier draft GMSF only had 55-60% housing targeted on brownfield and there were not targets for employment uses. This aligns well with the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework, July 2018 (NPPF 2018) new Section 11 on making more effective use of land. CPRE, with the support of local community representative will verify whether the Brownfield Registers, which record previously developed sites, are comprehensive and accurate. CPRE will still call for more brownfield land to be identified and it will make the case that more than 50% of industrial and warehousing should be directed to brownfield sites. The industrial legacy of Greater Manchester has left significant swathes of previously developed land, and more to come in 'windfall sites'.

Last but not least, the GMCA will not support shale exploration, which due to climate change impacts, inadequate environmental regulation, and Government consultation on both shale being considered by either permitted development or Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regimes, is supported by CPRE policy.



# JOIN CPRE

We're delighted you want to join CPRE and help us to stand up for the countryside. CPRE membership starts at £3 per month.

## CPRE CHESHIRE BRANCH MEMBERSHIP FORM

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

CPRE and your local CPRE branch will write to you about your membership and other things we think would be of interest to you. This may include sending you information about our work, campaigns, fundraising, events and other ways you can keep the fight for the countryside going.

Please let us know below if you would also be happy to hear from us by:

Email ☐ Yes - My email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ☐ Yes - My phone no.: \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't forget you can choose to change how we communicate with you or ask to stop hearing from us at any time. Simply email us at [supporterservices@cpre.org.uk](mailto:supporterservices@cpre.org.uk) or call 0800 163680. Please be assured that we will never sell or share your contact details with anyone outside CPRE.**

*If you would also like your partner and/or family to enjoy CPRE membership, please add their details below. We recommend a minimum of £5 per month membership if you are adding additional names.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (D.O.B. if under 16)

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

**Boost your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate. Simply tick the box and complete the declaration below. Thank you!**

☐ Treat as Gift Aid all donations and subscriptions I make from the date of this declaration, until I notify you otherwise. I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

If your circumstances change, or you want to cancel your declaration, please contact us on 0800 163680.

Full name of taxpayer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete payment information overleaf*

Direct Debit is the easiest way to pay and helps us to plan our work, but we also accept payments by cheque or debit card. Please complete the relevant section below.

### DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT

I wish to pay a Direct Debit of (please tick as appropriate):

£3 per month	<input type="checkbox"/>	£5 per month	<input type="checkbox"/>	£10 per month	<input type="checkbox"/>
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I'd rather pay £\_\_\_\_\_ per month/year (delete as appropriate)

#### Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit:

To: The Manager, \_\_\_\_\_ Bank/Building Society

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of account holder(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Sort Code: 

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 Account Number: 

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Service User Number:

7	2	4	2	4	5
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Reference: (for office use only)

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**Instruction to your Bank or Building Society:** Please pay CPRE Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction will remain with CPRE and my details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### PAYMENT BY CREDIT/DEBIT CARD OR CHEQUE

Please tick chosen annual membership rate below, and indicate how you will pay.

£36 (equivalent to £3 per month)	<input type="checkbox"/>
£60 (equivalent to £5 per month)	<input type="checkbox"/>
£120 (equivalent to £10 per month)	<input type="checkbox"/>
£_____ per year	<input type="checkbox"/>

☐ I have enclosed a cheque made payable to CPRE  
☐ OR I wish to pay by Credit/Debit Card

Card type (please circle): Visa / Mastercard / Amex

Card number:

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Expiry Date:

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Start Date:

		/		
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Security Code:

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Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this form and return to:

Freeport Plus RTCK-UBXX-BBCR, Supporter Services, CPRE,  
5 Lavington Street, London, SE1 0NZ

# MORE AND BETTER BROWNFIELD REGENERATION

CPRE's public meeting, held in Manchester on March 26th, brought together politicians, academics and members of the public to look for a consensus on how best to ensure that development is targeted on brownfield land where possible, as well as considering other ways to ensure best use of derelict land by greening if development is not appropriate.



Speakers included CPRE's Chief Executive, Crispin Truman, Councillors Derek Long (leader of St Helens Council) and Paul Dennett (leader of Salford City Council), Professor Graham Haughton, and CPRE's Jackie Copley and Rebecca Pullinger. Following introductions from each of the speakers, and an outline of the findings of CPRE's recently released 'State of Brownfield' report, the panel each articulated their own position on the topic of freeing up brownfield for development, following which questions were asked from the floor on a number of topics.

CPRE's 'State of Brownfield' report found that across the country, there is enough brownfield land available to build over a million new homes; for each brownfield site that is developed, a similar amount of land in the countryside or Green Belt can be protected, which means this is a vital, but sadly under-used resource. The figures for each area of Cheshire are listed in the table opposite.



Local Planning Authority	Total number of sites	Total area (hectares)	Total minimum housing capacity
Cheshire East Council	68	42	1574
Cheshire West and Chester Council	194	259	7710
Halton Borough Council	34	53	1198
Stockport Council	27	34	1535
Trafford Council	42	32	2276
Warrington	129	231	7342
Wirral	83	48	2852

<b>Total</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>24487</b>
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Rebecca Pullinger, who carried out the research for CPRE, commented ‘Building on brownfield land presents a fantastic opportunity to simultaneously remove local eyesores and breathe new life into areas crying out for regeneration. It will help to limit the amount of countryside lost to development, and build more homes in areas where people want to live, with infrastructure, amenities and services already in place.

‘Councils have worked hard to identify space suitable for more than one million new homes. But until we have a brownfield first approach to development, and all types of previously developed land are considered, a large number of sites that could be transformed into desperately needed new homes will continue to be overlooked. The government, local councils and house builders must work hard to bring these sites forward for development and get building.’

In order to make best use of suitable brownfield land, CPRE is urging the government to introduce a genuine ‘brownfield first’ policy, which ensures that suitable previously developed or under-used land is prioritised for redevelopment over green spaces and countryside. Clearer definitions and guidelines must be given so that the registers act as a true pipeline, identifying all possible brownfield sites and recording their suitability for uses other than housing, including uses that protect the biodiversity or heritage value of sites where applicable.

CPRE pledges to continue its effort to encourage local authorities to reuse more brownfield land by engaging in dialogue with local authorities and Government, local communities and relevant stake holders to achieve better approaches. In doing so, we hope to make urban places more liveable and at the same reduce the need to develop our beloved green spaces. If you are interested in our brownfield land campaign and events like that above, sign up to our email mailing list via this link: <http://eepurl.com/dBJS2H>



## CHESHIRE'S TWIN TRAILS

The beautiful red stone of the Sandstone Ridge can be seen in the south of the county, in the building stones used for many churches, in subtle outcrops rising from some of the fields, and in the exposed rocks which provide both the name and the structure of the Sandstone Ridge. This stone was laid down in the Triassic period about 250 million years ago, at a time when Cheshire was much more arid than it is now! The presence of iron oxide both gives the rock its colour and tells geologists about its origin, in conditions where long spells of dry weather are punctuated occasionally by rain.

The darker rock that gives its name to the Gritstone Trail in the north of the county is also a type of sandstone, but it is coarser and much less prone to erosion. Like the red sandstone, it is a sedimentary rock, and its strata can be seen in exposed locations where the rock has been weathered into clear layers. As well as being seen as a building stone across the dark peak area, its use in millstones is commemorated in the markers indicating the boundaries of the Peak District National Park.

There is much symmetry between the two long distance trails which are focused on these ridges; both are about 55km long, both offer panoramic views of the Cheshire Plain and across to the Welsh hills. Both offer many waymarked paths and trails to walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester councils are currently working on the 'Twin Trails' project to highlight both of these wonderful walks.

We plan to look at the Gritstone Trail in more detail in a future edition, but at this year's AGM we will focus on the Sandstone Ridge and the ongoing work being put into gaining recognition of this important area as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Professor Andrew Hull, Chair-

man of the Sandstone Ridge Trust and Emeritus Professor of Landscape Ecology at Liverpool John Moores University, has been instrumental in this bid and is to give a talk to members at this year's Branch AGM (see below for details) on the history of this area and special characteristics of the landscape. We hope that as many as possible of you will attend. The Sandstone Ridge Trust has worked hard to organise volunteering opportunities, cultural events and archaeological explorations in order to get people more involved with maintaining their local rural areas and to raise awareness of the history of the area. There is a great deal of information on accessing the countryside of the Sandstone Ridge on the website: [www.sandstoneridge.org.uk](http://www.sandstoneridge.org.uk)

## **CHESHIRE BRANCH AGM**

This year's AGM will be held in the picturesque Willington Hall Hotel, which was built in 1829 in Elizabethan style for Mr. Richard Tomkinson, a former master of the Cheshire Hounds. The hotel has beautiful gardens which visitors are welcome to explore before the meeting. Following a brief AGM, Professor Andrew Hull will give a talk on the Sandstone Ridge Trust and its work, with time for questions, and then members are invited to stay for a delicious buffet at £10 per head (optional) made by the hotel's chef, which will comprise a range of sandwiches on white and brown bread, dim sum, chicken, and vegetarian spring rolls.

Professor Hull set up the Ponds Research Unit in 1990, and soon after this, undertook the first audit of Cheshire ponds. He was seconded to become Project Director of the EU-funded 'Pond Life Project' between 1995-1999 and the outcomes of this project laid the foundations for best practice in pond conservation to this day. In addition to his work with the Sandstone Ridge Trust, he is a member of the Rural Regeneration Board for Cheshire West and Chester Council and President of the European Pond Conservation Network.

Please return the enclosed booking slip to secure your place(s).





# DISTRICT NEWS

## Neighbourhood Plans

Middlewich became only the third place in the country to reject a Neighbourhood Plan in a referendum held on March 14th. The vote was close, with 1085 against and 1064 for. By contrast, Knutsford's Neighbourhood Plan was accepted, with around 83% of voters in favour of the plan. Turnout was at a similar level in both votes, at about 20%.

## Wirral Waters

A £6m grant from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund will allow the council to deliver a package of remediation works across the Wirral Waters site, to enable the construction of 1,106 residential units across the area. This should reduce some of the pressure on the Wirral's Green Belt and, as Wirral Waters is on a brownfield site, is particularly welcome news to CPRE.

## Dane Valley, Northwich

Plans to build 227 new homes in the Dane Valley in Northwich, accessed from London Road, which were rejected by Cheshire West and Chester Council in May 2018 were approved at appeal by Inspector, Mr S J Lee. The plans were initially approved in outline by the council, who then refused the plans on the grounds that the design code initially specified had not been followed.

## New brownfield powers in Macclesfield

Cheshire East Council has granted itself new planning powers to facilitate development of brownfield sites (both residential and business) in Macclesfield. The 'local development order' was approved at a cabinet meeting in February and allows the council to bring in permitted development rights, meaning that if a proposal meets certain criteria, it can be built without a planning application.

## Government funding withdrawn from Greater Manchester following cut in Green Belt housing allocation

The Government has told Greater Manchester that the City Region will no longer be receiving a £68m brownfield housing fund, following the reduction of housing targets included in the rewritten Spatial Framework. This reduction, argued for by CPRE, means that about half of the sites previously allocated on Green Belt land have been removed from the current draft plan.



### **Warrington District**

The public consultation into the Draft Warrington Local Plan starts in April. It can be found on the front page of [www.warrington.gov.uk](http://www.warrington.gov.uk)

The “Frequently asked questions” is useful as well as the information from earlier consultations

This is a large document, 602 pages, with appendices, one being responses to the previous representations.

Warrington has to develop in line with national policy, details of this are in the documents, particularly with respect to housing supply.

There is more information to be found by going to the Popular Services section on the Borough Council front page, clicking on Planning and building control, then on Planning Policy, then on Evidence Base.

If on reading the plan you realise some brownfield sites have not been listed, you can check there with the Brownfield Register and include it in your response.

It is important that as well as any objections that you may have, you support the Council where it has chosen to keep sites in the Green Belt.

We will be putting in a CPRE objection.

We have other local authorities on our borders and we liaise with CPRE Lancashire. Currently we have proposals for Distribution Centres to the North of Warrington as well as proposals for the same in Warrington particularly in the South. Yet we have a motorway system that is unreliable, and local roads that are congested at times of the day.

We have asked and continue to ask that the cumulative impact of all these proposals is considered, including total Green Belt loss and degradation of air quality.

HS2 is still there at the time of writing albeit with a new liaison person for our areas.

*Jacqui Johnson, Warrington District*

### **The Wirral Society**

James Brokenshire recently wrote to Wirral Council, highlighting the fact that since 2004, the Council has failed to meet 6 local plan ‘milestones’ in a number of local development schemes, and ‘has failed to plan for and deliver the homes their area needs, by producing an up-to-date local plan’.

Although the Minister acknowledges the Borough doesn’t have high housing pressures, he still considers it would be appropriate to intervene as the Council’s performance in respect of the other criteria is “lamentable”. He says the Government won’t take over the plan-making process, but has issued the Council with directions, that it should by mid April;

- Designate a lead councillor and lead official to be responsible for progressing preparation of the local plan.
- Publish an action plan setting out the actions that will be taken to get a local plan in place, including the allocation of sufficient land for housing for the whole of Wirral for the plan period. The action plan must be verified by “independent planning experts”.
- Arrange for monthly progress reports to his officials.



We now know the required people are in place. It is the Council's failure to produce a Local Plan that is putting the Green Belt at undue threat.

Housing targets are a matter of major concern. Some 10 years ago, under the North West 'Regional Spatial Strategy', the number of buildings identified as being needed annually in Wirral Borough was just 250; now the target figure is being set by Government at 803 houses per year. As estate agents report no increase in the level of demand for houses and, with no new large employers setting up in the Wirral, we believe there will continue to be a net reduction in population.

The Minister is, on the one hand, telling the Council that its Department's Local Plan housing-need figure 'is not a target' and is saying 'authorities should make a realistic assessment of the number of homes their communities need', but on the other hand still says "I believe we [the Government] are best placed to make that judgement". We are currently trying to clarify what exactly this means! However, we continue to have our suspicions about Wirral Council motives, having heard reports that the Council's own planning team is talking to developers about when, not if, Green Belt land is released!

### **Proposed 'Golf' Resort**

The most recent developments are that a second Council meeting was called recently, to debate several Motions, including one that the project be discontinued. The meeting was attended by a large number of Wirral residents, anxious to show their objection to the way in which the Council continues to steamroller this project forward with no evidence of popular support or financial viability. Whilst the Motion to discontinue was narrowly defeated, a scrutiny committee is now to look at all aspects of the scheme's viability, before it is submitted to Cabinet.

As we have reservations about the political independence of the Council's Scrutiny Committees in general, we are not optimistic that their deliberations will change anything. We hope that this will at least delay the Council leader submitting a 'Funding and Phasing' plan through Cabinet. As we understand it, such an agreement could commit the Council to incurring financial penalties if it decided later on to pull out of the deal. This would have to be paid from council tax.

We are also aware that a Mr Jim Anderson, representing the developers, believes that its opponents have been 'giving out misinformation'



on this resort. He is currently trying to convince local people of the ‘benefits’ of the resort, saying it is a project for everyone in the area. He believes it will be a creator of wealth and jobs. Whatever he may believe, it is most people’s view that this cannot be proved, as no feasibility or economic studies have been done to back up those claims.

To support his case he said he delivered a similar site at Machynys in South Wales. In fact, his track record there shows that, although his company built a golf course, the projected hotel was not built and much of the rest of the land went for building houses. His construction company was subsequently put into creditors’ liquidation.

The Society has written to the Chief Executive of the Redrow company, which is now wanting to build the houses as part of the project. We have asked whether they have carried out any due diligence on the Company leading on the scheme and also if they are aware of the topography of the land they are interested in building on. It is no surprise that we have not yet had a reply.

### **Former Burton’s Biscuit factory, Moreton**

We learn that work has started on demolishing that part of the factory that is now disused, in preparation for the construction of new houses on this site. After a long delay, it’s good news that houses are being built within the Moreton township, which must be welcomed by local retail businesses, and is further evidence that any housing need can be provided in the Borough, without resorting to building in the Green Belt.

*Rod Tann, Chair, The Wirral Society*

# WOODCHURCH ROAD HEDGELAYING



Volunteers from the Wirral, including pupils from nearby Woodchurch High School, came together on 25th November to plant trees and lay a hedgerow at an event financially supported by the Wirral Society and facilitated by the Wirral Countryside Volunteers, marking the start of a four-year project to revitalise hedgerow, which forms an important natural boundary and wildlife corridor between Green Belt land and suburbs of Birkenhead.

Hedgelaying became a common method of hedgerow management following the Enclosure Acts, maintaining a stock-proof boundary by partially cutting through the trunks hedgerow plants near ground level and bending the wood down, intertwining with other adjacent plants, so that each shrub puts its energy into growing upwards from the almost-horizontal shrub, creating a thicker hedge without gaps.

Hedgerows lend beauty and character to the landscape and provide a wide range of benefits to wildlife and the wider environment, especially in light of the loss of woodlands. They provide tangible, and widely appreciated, signs of the changing seasons while at the same time giving a strong sense of continuity. They also make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. CPRE is committed to working to protect these important and iconic landscape features.