Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2025

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE KENT BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND (CHARITY NUMBER 1092012, COMPANY NUMBER 04335730) AND THE KENT BRANCH OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND (CHARITY NUMBER 286183) HELD ON NOVEMBER 21 2025 AT LENHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

1. Apologies for Absence
Both organisations were considered together. Forty-three members were present and six sent apologies.

2. Chairman's Welcome
Ben Moorhead, Chairman, welcomed all present and introduced President Jonathan Tennant, who spoke about solar farms and the particular threat to his home village of Aldington, where several schemes had been proposed.
JT noted that the Development Consent Order examination for one of them had been "little short of farce", with a lack of consultation and process throughout. The experience had "spoken volumes" about the confidence that promoters of such schemes had. The parish council had applied for a judicial review, saying the Secretary of State's decision was legally flawed in at least one aspect.
BM then referred to proposals for three huge solar farms on Romney Marsh, describing the wider push for solar energy as "a runaway train".

3. Minutes of 2024 AGM
The minutes of the annual general meeting held on November 22 2024 were presented and accepted unanimously on a show of hands.

4. Annual Report
Director Andrea Griffiths gave an illustrated talk, saying this was just "a snapshot" as there was too much to cover in its entirety.
It had been a year of fighting fires and we had made dozens of objections to planning applications and spoken at such inquiries as that for Highsted Park, a vast housing scheme near Sittingbourne.
There had been 12 new major energy infrastructure projects to tackle, while Sea Link (National Grid) and Stonestreet Green Solar had in particular taken much of our resource.
We had taken the government to court over a housing development at Turnden, a greenfield site in the High Weald National Landscape - our challenge had resulted in a "kind of win" and showed we were willing to fight for the countryside.

Another positive outcome had been at Hoad's Wood, near Bethersden, where 12,000 tonnes of illegally-dumped waste had already been removed.
Less positively, the Lower Thames Crossing has been approved by government.
The year had seen the sad loss of our patron Sir Robert Worcester and tireless campaigner Alex Hills.
Looking ahead, we had received substantial funding for our Hedgerow Heroes project, while we were organising a Love Your Countryside Day event as part of CPRE National's centenary celebrations and were trying to get a Dark Skies project off the ground in Medway.
AG concluded by thanking the CPRE Kent team, trustees and volunteers.

5. Chairman's Report
BM praised the team at Charing for their efforts over the year.
He thanked John Wotton, Tunbridge Wells chairman, for helping with our Turnden case and JT for his efforts in relation to solar farms.
He noted that Michael Moore, who would be Treasurer until after lunch, had turned up on crutches having broken his hip. He had worked tirelessly for CPRE Kent and would help Rod Muir settle into his role as his replacement.
Referring to the district group chairs, BM said it was nice to see some new people coming on-stream, highlighting Nigel Kay at Swale, Peter Styles and Sarah Cassidy in Canterbury and Anna Simmonds in Medway.
BM paid tribute to Alex Hills, "an extraordinarily kind man" who had done so much for so many organisations.
The Chairman talked about housing pressures in the county, noting specifically the reduction or cancelling of the Empty Homes programme and New Homes Bonus Scheme, before turning his attention to the ongoing issue of solar farms, which, as things stood, could claim almost 5,000 acres of south Kent and Romney Marsh. This was a strategy built not on power but on money, he said. He believed Romney Marsh should have been declared a national park years ago.
BM concluded that CPRE Kent were still flourishing despite the terrible development pressures on the county. "Keep your hats on for the long run," he said.

6. Treasurer's Report
Treasurer Michael Moore went through the summary accounts briefly - all present had a copy of the Statement of Financial Activities for the year ending March 31 2025.
MM said there had been a substantial gain on investments, while the charity was in good shape financially. We had total funds carried forward of £6,145,201.
Our accounts were audited by Kreston Reeves.

7. Comments on Annual Reports
Felicity Simpson said it was obvious the really big issue was solar farms - there followed a discussion on the subject, with a call for a national CPRE policy, together

with the suggestion that perhaps nuclear energy in the form of small modular reactors could be considered. It was widely agreed that there needed to be a national energy debate.
Christine Drury asked if this AGM could be used to spark a policy of rooftop solar and small modular reactors, while Graham Horner pointed out that if Dungeness nuclear power station were redeveloped (still as nuclear) it would cost no farmland and produce far more power per unit of land than solar farms.

8. Honorary Officers
(Honorary Officers do not need to be elected)
8.1 President: Jonathan Tennant remained in office.
8.2 Vice Presidents: Amanda Cottrell OBE DL, Richard King and Richard Knox-Johnston remained in office.

9. Election of Members of the Board
9.1 Chairman: Michael Moore proposed, and John Wotton seconded, that Ben Moorhead DL be re-elected as Chairman. This was approved unanimously by a show of hands.
9.2 Treasurer: Michael Moore proposed, and Nigel Britten seconded, that Rod Muir be elected as treasurer. This was approved unanimously by a show of hands.
9.3 District Committee and Specialist Group Members: David Wood proposed, and Hilary Newport seconded, the following as district committee and specialist group members: Christine Drury, Graham Horner and Peter Lorenzo. All were approved unanimously by a show of hands.
9.4 General Members: David Wood proposed, and Hilary Newport seconded, the following as general members: Nigel Britten, Paul Buckley, Rt Hon Damian Green, Val Loseby, Michael Moore and Rod Muir as general members. All were approved unanimously by a show of hands.

10. Auditors: Michael Moore proposed, and Rt Hon Damian Green seconded, the appointment of Kreston Reeves as auditors. This was approved unanimously.

11. Maria Greenwood: CPRE Kent's Free Will offer
Maria Greenwood, of Squiggle, introduced and explained CPRE Kent's Free Will offer, open to staff, members and supporters of the charity.

12. Guy Nevill: Chalk to Coast
Guy Nevill, farmer, steward of Birling Estate and creator of the Chalk to Coast initiative (in which CPRE Kent is a partner), spoke about the vision for a nature corridor linking the chalk downs of north Kent with the Thames estuary.

13. Close followed by lunch