CPRE CHESHIRE ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Registered Charity Number 248304

The principal address of the charity and address for correspondence is:

The Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England
Victoria Buildings
Lewin Street
Middlewich, CW10 9AT

Tel: 01606 835046
Email info@cprecheshire.org.uk
Website: www.cprecheshire.org.uk

The Charity's Governing Documents:

The Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is a Registered Charity, no. 248304. The governing document is the Constitution dated 16 February 1996 (updated 15th August 2007).

The objectives of the charity.

The object of CPRE Cheshire Branch is to promote and encourage the improvement, protection and preservation of the countryside.

The Branch's activities cover the historic County of Cheshire which now comprises the Unitary Councils of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Stockport, Trafford and Wirral.

The Branch's activities are aimed at improving the rural environment in the interests of communities living in rural areas as well as those in towns and neighbouring cities who enjoy our beautiful Cheshire countryside.

The Charity does not make grants to third parties. From time to time the Branch may give support to related charities and parties with similar objectives.

Chairman's Summary of the year

Introduction - 2025 proved to be another year of significant opportunity and challenge for CPRE Cheshire.

We continued to work with the national CPRE charity to promote a beautiful and resilient countryside which is valued by local communities. As part of this we sought to ensure that legislative changes retain important protections for wildlife. We also supported ambitions for a new Land Use Framework to manage the competing demands on rural areas, promote better use of rooftops and car parks to generate solar power, and to ensure that new housing in rural areas is affordable to those that need it. We also worked to understand the implications for the countryside of the Government's devolution agenda, including the proposed new strategic Mayoral authority for Cheshire and Warrington.

Within our local branch we continued to pursue our charitable objective of protecting and enhancing the Cheshire countryside. This is so that it can fulfil its functions of: providing food; supporting nature; providing enjoyment and inspiration to the community; reducing carbon emissions and mitigating the worst effects of climate change. I set out later in this report how our activities impacted upon different parts of our area.

Hedgerow Heroes - I am delighted to say that the branch was offered funding of £50,760 from CPRE National for its Hedgerow Heroes programme for 2025/26. Within this project we worked with a partner charity (TCV – the Conservation Volunteers) to plant and/or restore nearly 2,000 metres of hedging over the autumn and winter of 2025/26. Of this total, 815 metres was completed by 31 December 2025, with the remainder due in early 2026.

The Hedgerow Heroes project has included sites in the Mersey Valley area, which is recognised in CPRE national research as an area in particular need for new hedge planting. It enabled a wide range of volunteers including schoolchildren and other groups to get active in the open air and learn new skills. The new hedging provided will enhance landscape and biodiversity.

Planning for CPRE's Centenary in 2026 - We also worked in 2025 to prepare for the Centenary year of CPRE at the national level in 2026. As part of this the Cheshire branch of CPRE obtained funding of £3,623 to oversee a photo competition to be undertaken in 2026 which will invite entries along themes which will celebrate the countryside in our local area.

Branch Annual General Meeting 2025 and proposed changes to our governance - We had an enjoyable AGM in May 2025 at the Lion Salt Works in Northwich, which is a fascinating site illustrating the open-pan method of salt-making – a traditional industry in Cheshire. The AGM also functioned as an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) which included a key decision to convert our charity from an un-incorporated association to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). As required by our constitution we had previously obtained approval for this change from the national CPRE's Board of Trustees in December 2024. In accordance with these decisions our plans for 2026 and beyond include: registering the new CIO with the Charity Commission; transferring assets to the new CIO; and then in due course closing the existing un-incorporated charity. This change will provide stronger governance for our charity and greater legal protection for Trustees.

Partnerships with other organisations - In addition to our work with CPRE national we also continued to engage in 2025 with neighbouring branches of CPRE, including CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester with whom we have regular meetings along with Friends of the Lake District. We also remained a member of the Cheshire Local Nature Partnership which has developed the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cheshire and Warrington.

Cheshire Sandstone Ridge - We continued to work in 2025 with another charity - the Sandstone Ridge Trust – to promote the designation of a new National Landscape in its area, which forms an attractive line of sandstone outcrops and scattered woodland and heathland habitats running through the heart of Cheshire. The term "National Landscape" is now used to describe areas which are legally designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Designation of an area as a National Landscape enables it to be subject to greater protection from forms of development which could harm its landscape and can also enable further funding to be sourced to support measures such as visitor facilities and interpretation. Sadly, Natural England (the responsible national agency) confirmed in May 2025 that due to budget pressures it was stopping work on the designation. This is a matter of regret for CPRE Cheshire as we feel that this represents a lost opportunity to give enhanced protection and stewardship for this part of our area.

Local planning issues - The Government's planning reforms and drive for higher amounts of new development had major implications for the work of CPRE Cheshire in 2025. They led for example to the introduction of the concept of "grey belt" and the Government's new "standard method" for calculating need for new homes which has led to much higher targets for development. The combined

effect of these and other changes to the planning system has been to substantially weaken the protections for Green Belt and open countryside areas around the cities and towns in large parts of our branch area.

CPRE Cheshire received requests throughout 2025 from local community groups and individuals, asking for help in responding to planning proposals affecting their area. Whilst we could not respond to all consultations and requests due to our small and voluntary nature, we provided advice and submitted comments to local planning authorities where this was in line with our charitable objectives and we had the capacity to do so.

I set out below some key planning issues which we addressed in specific parts of our branch area in 2025:

Cheshire East and Adlington New Town - A key issue affecting Cheshire East was the publication of the New Towns Task Force Report in September 2025 which identified the rural village of Adlington as a potential location for a New Town of up to 20,000 dwellings. CPRE Cheshire worked with CPRE national, local community groups and the Macclesfield constituency MP to challenge this proposal which in our view is a poor location for a New Town. This is due for example to the harm that would be caused to local landscape and wildlife and the lack of suitable infrastructure. By the end of 2025, Cheshire East Council had confirmed its opposition to the proposal. We believe that Adlington is a much less suitable location for a New Town than some of the others recommended by the Task Force (such as Manchester Victoria) which would promote regeneration of brownfield sites in urban areas.

In 2025 we also responded to consultation on the Cheshire East Local Transport Plan, in order to ensure for example that it promotes environmental sustainability and the use of sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport. A key challenge for 2026 is likely to be responding to the next stage of the Cheshire East Local Plan.

Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) - CWaC has also been very significantly affected by the higher targets for new housing development which are causing substantial pressure for expansion of urban areas into Green Belt and countryside areas. A key part of the branches activity in 2025 was our response to the consultation on the CWaC Local Plan Issues and Options consultation. In our response we placed particular emphasis on the need to protect the Borough's areas of Green Belt, and also set out a more general concern about the level of development which is proposed outside existing urban areas, including areas of open countryside in the southern part of the Borough which are not protected by Green Belt status. We expect the CWaC Local Plan to reach its next consultation stage in 2026 and responding to this will be likely to form a key priority for our branch.

M6 lorry trailer advertisements - A further issue which has affected both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Council areas has been the growing problem of large and unsightly unauthorised advertisements being displayed on the sides of lorry trailers placed in fields and/or other rural land alongside the M6 motorway. We responded to this by submitting formal enforcement complaints to the two Councils. This issue remained unresolved at the end of 2025.

Halton - Key issues in Halton included monitoring pressures on the Borough's countryside following the adoption of the constituent parts of the Council's current Local Plan in earlier years. Whilst we had fewer requests for assistance from local groups and individuals in Halton than in some other areas it remains a key part of our branch area. Halton will also be covered by the proposed Liverpool City Spatial Development Strategy, which we intend to engage with in the future via joint working with colleagues at CPRE Lancashire.

Stockport - A key milestone was our response to the draft Stockport Local Plan, submitted in December 2025. Our response welcomed some aspects of the Plan, such as its proposals to regenerate Stockport Town Centre. However, we expressed concern about the proposal to develop a total of 8,965 dwellings and also some employment development on land outside the current urban

areas. In our view, these proposals would substantially extend urban sprawl in this part of Greater Manchester. We expect the Stockport Local Plan to reach its next consultation stage in 2026 and responding to this in line with our charitable objectives will be likely to form a key priority for our branch.

Trafford - We responded to consultation on the draft Trafford Local Plan in June 2025. The Local Plan for this area is being progressed under the strategic "umbrella" provided by the Places for Everyone (PfE) joint plan which has previously been adopted and covers all the planning authority areas in Greater Manchester, with the exception of Stockport. Contrary to our charitable objectives, the adopted PfE plan contained proposals for very large-scale Green Belt loss at New Carrington and the Timperley Wedge. Our response to the draft Trafford Local Plan re-iterated our concerns about these proposals but expressed relief that the Council is not proposing any further loss of Green Belt.

Warrington - Activity in Warrington in 2025 was largely connected with implementation of its Local Plan, which was adopted by the Council in 2023. It is a matter of regret to the branch that the Plan as adopted included substantial areas of Green Belt loss at South East Warrington and elsewhere, although we were pleased that the amount of Green Belt land lost to new warehousing had been reduced as a result of the independent examination of the Plan by Government appointed Inspectors. The Borough is also affected by emerging proposals for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) site affecting a large swather of countryside just outside our branch area to the east of the Parkside site in St Helens.

Wirral - The Wirral Local Plan was adopted in March 2025. We were glad to see that in line with earlier representations by CPRE in conjunction with local community groups, the Plan proposed an "urban regeneration-led" approach to meeting development needs. However, the Borough continues to be under pressure from developers for new housing development, including in its important Green Belt areas. Wirral is also affected by the higher housing need figures derived from recent Government policy. A key priority for future years is likely to be monitoring the situation in Wirral to ensure new development continues to focus on much needed urban regeneration and thereby protect the Borough's important Green Belt areas.

Challenges for the future - A key challenge facing the branch in 2025 continued to be its small size and limited financial resources, which inevitably restricts our ability to engage as much as we would like for example, with local communities concerning planning issues in their area. We rely almost entirely on voluntary support and a further challenge is provided by our gradually falling membership levels. We are addressing this in partnership with CPRE national, for example by the introduction of a new and reduced £3 per month membership, and by ensuring that good use is made of the internet, social media and other communications to spread the word about CPRE and the public benefits that it seeks to promote.

Thank you to our Trustees, other volunteers, staff and supporters

We continue to be blessed with a team of dedicated and able volunteers who perform various roles including holding posts as Trustees, helping respond to local planning issues and organising our communication activities. I am also delighted to say that our Branch Secretary (who is our only employee) was granted a CPRE national Special Contribution Award in 2025, in recognition of her exceptional service. I remain extremely grateful for the help provided by all our Trustees, volunteers and employee, and for the generous support of our members and donors.

2025 Financial Report

The financial plan for 2025 initially projected an income of £13,261. However, the actual income for the year significantly exceeded expectations, reaching £53,197. This resulted in a positive variance of £38,052.

Key Factors Contributing to the Positive Variance:

1. **Legacies Received**: Legacy contributed a total of £10,000, providing a substantial boost to the income.
2. **Restricted Funds**: Two items of restricted fund received of £28,380. Of this £25,380 was received from CPRE national for Hedgerow Heroes funding.

The expenditure for 2025 was budgeted at £17,308; however, the actual cost amounted to £15,145, resulting in a positive variance of £2,163.

Key Variances in Expenditure:

1. **Commissioned Work**: Budgeted at £2,000 but did not materialize, contributing to reduced costs.
2. **Contingency Fund**: Budgeted at £1,000 but was not utilised, further enhancing the positive variance.

Financial Position: The liquid assets as of 31/12/25 stand at £97,817, reflecting an increase of £41,848 compared to 31/12/24. This strengthened financial position ensures stability and sustainability for the foreseeable future.

Names and address of relevant organisations and advisors to the charity.

- **Bankers**: National Westminster Bank PLC.
- **Investments:** Hargreaves Lansdown, Bristol.
- **Hon. Independent Examiner:** Christine Mann, Sandbach.

Trustees

Chairman – Mr Jonathan Clarke; **Treasurer** – Mr Ismail Ravat*; **Other Trustees –** Mr Peter Raynes* (Vice President); Mr Andrew Needham (Vice Chairman); Mr Derek Goldstraw*; Mrs Jacqui Johnson; Mr Peter Moore-Dutton; Mr Rod Tann, and Mrs Rhoda Bailey.

(* = Investment Trustees also)

The Following policies govern the level of reserves:

The Trustees have determined that we should maintain reserves at a minimum level of £10,000 (and repeated in the section detailing steps to mitigate risks). This is consistent with a wish to ensure we have cover for at least three months running costs and any necessary statutory payments and contractual commitments.

The selection of investments for the charity.

There is no written policy for the selection of investments.

In agreement with the Investment Trustees, they consider that the most appropriate investment is in a portfolio to maintain the capital against inflation whilst achieving a balance between capital growth and income.

The Investment Trustees have powers under the constitution to invest in such investments, securities or property as may be thought fit.

Major Risks to which the charity is exposed.

Expenditure exceeds income.

Systems designed to mitigate the above risks

The Trustees make bi-monthly checks on the cash flow and forward plan activities to identify areas where they may be able to apply for grants or make savings.

Trustees are putting plans in place to attract new members.

Provision is made to ensure that sufficient reserves are in place to cover costs incurred, and in any event should not drop below £10,000.

The organisational structure of the charity.

CPRE Cheshire Branch is an Independent Charity within the CPRE National network.

The Cheshire Branch constitution allows for District Committees to be formed mirroring local government administrative boundaries.

Management

The business of the Cheshire CPRE is managed by the Executive Committee comprising the Trustees nominated at the Annual General Meeting. Nominations are sought from CPRE Cheshire members for these posts. The Chairman is accountable for the day to day running of the branch and is assisted by the Treasurer and members of the Executive Committee. The charity employs a part-time Secretary who reports to the Chairman.

Districts organisation

We have member representatives in the local authority areas covered by Cheshire CPRE. District members monitor planning applications published by their local authority. They comment on applications and campaign against threats to the countryside and where appropriate appear in Public Enquiries. Members also offer advice and help to both parish councils and local community action groups on planning matters. They take part in local forums with other environmental groups, business and local authorities. They may respond to consultations on major initiatives such as transport schemes, major retail and employment developments, waste disposal, mineral extraction and renewable energy projects. The Branch provides assistance to the districts when requested.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Jonathan Clarke

Chairman

THE CHESHIRE BRANCH OF THE CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND

Receipts and Payments account for the year ended 31-Dec-25

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Report to the Trustees of the Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England

Charity Number 248304

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner
The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the act').

The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under Section 144 of the Act and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under Section 145 of the Act;
- follow the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)b of the Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's statement
My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Branch and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's statement
In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with Section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Christine Mann **CPFA**

Sandbach
Cheshire

Signature 

Date 14.5.26

The Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England
Year ended 31 December 2025
Receipts and Payments Account

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Receipts					
Subscriptions		13,066		13,066	13,979
Donations, legacies and		10,412	28,380	38,792	5,144
Sundry income				-	-
Investment income/Interest		1,339		1,339	1,272
				-	-
Gross Income		24,817	28,380	53,197	20,395
Payments					
Charitable activities	2	13,751	269	14,020	15,872
Governance costs	3	1,125		1,125	1,329
Total payments		14,876	269	15,145	17,202
Net receipts/(payments)		9,941	28,111	38,052	3,193
Cash funds at 1 January		14,959	12,000	26,959	23,766
Cash Funds at 31 December		24,900	40,111	65,011	26,959

The Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England

Year ended 31 December 2025

Statement of assets and liabilities

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Cash funds					
Bank current account		2,614	3,000	5,614	3,335
Bank deposit account		19,286	40,111	59,397	23,624
Cash on hand		0	0	0	0
Total cash funds		21,900	43,111	65,011	26,959
Other monetary assets					
Sundry debtors					
Investment assets					
Investment portfolio	4	32,806	0	32,806	29,010
Assets retained for the charity's use					
Fixed assets	5	0	0	0	0
Liabilities					
Sundry creditors		0	0	0	0
Total assets less liabilities		54,706	43,111	97,817	55,969
Represented by:					
Total Unrestricted Funds		54,706		54,706	43,969
Total Restricted Funds			43,111	43,111	12,000
Total Funds		54,706	43,111	97,817	55,969

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

I S Ravat
Treasurer & Trustee

Date 14/May/26.

The Cheshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England
Year ended 31 December 2025

Notes to the Accounts

1 **Accounting convention**

The accounts have been prepared on a cash basis following the guidance provided by The Charity Commission for England and Wales for the completion of a receipts and payments account. Additional information is provided with respect to the valuation of assets and liabilities at the year end to give a better understanding of the types of assets controlled by the trustees and any material liabilities that may need to be met from the funds.

2 **Charitable activities**

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
	£	£	£	£
Wages	9,222	-	9,222	9,041
Travel and Other Expenses	325	-	325	207
Campaign expenses		-	-	-
Consultancy/commissioned work	-	269	269	3,433
Events	481	-	481	184
Donations	-		-	150
Postage, printing and stationery	1,076	-	1,076	570
Rent and service charge	2,447	-	2,447	2,288
Telephone	200	-	200	-
	13,751	269	14,020	15,872

3 **Governance costs**

Wages re. Financial Services + Meetings	210	-	210	135
Travel	325	-	325	827
Rent and service charge		-	-	120
Postage, printing and stationery	50	-	50	12
Telephone	97	-	97	-
Miscellaneous expenses	266	-	266	78
Insurance	177	-	177	157
	1,125	-	1,125	1,329

4 **Investment portfolio**

	2024
	£
Balance at 1 January 2025	29,010
Transfer of a Cash element of Investment Portfolio to Current Account	-
Increase in value (unrealised gain)/decrease in value (unrealised loss) for the year	3,796
Balance at 31 December 2025	**32,806**

5 **Fixed assets**

	Telephone, fax and equipment	Exhibition stand and fittings	Office Equipment	Total
	£	£	£	£
Cost 1 Jan. 2025 and 31 Dec. 2025	209	1,476	3,657	5,342
Accumulated Depreciation 31 Dec. 2025	209	1,476	3,657	5,342
Net book value at 31 DEC 25	0	0	0	0

6 **Unrestricted/Restricted Funds**

	2025
	£
Balance at 1 January 2025	55,969
Net Cash Increase/(Deficit)	38,052
Unrealised gain/(loss) on investment portfolio	3,796
Sundry Creditors	
Debtors and accruals	
	97,817

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

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