

Chair's Report – 2 July 2025

Good Evening,

As we meet during the heatwave of the summer of 2025, it is timely to mention the work that is done by one of the organisations that we subscribe to – the Campaign to Protect Rural England. This is important in context with one other presentation this evening and that is the Unitary Authority piece, Number 15 on the agenda.

In their 2024 Impact Report the group discusses in some detail their objection to:

1. The Abingdon reservoir : CPRE submitted a Freedom of Information Request and unearthed the Environment Agency's advice not to go ahead with the proposed project. At appeal, the Inspector ruled that the project could go ahead. CPRE calls for a Public Inquiry and has not requested a Judicial Review. This issue seems to me to be the very crux of the issue of need versus nature – a central argument in most rural planning appeals.
2. The Otmoor Solar Farm in the middle of Otmoor on the Oxfordshire Green Belt, the other on open countryside at Godington, a tiny village near Stratton Audley. Currently, these are both going to appeal at the moment.

What are they doing in a positive way:

1. CPRE has supported the Sunshine Bill – aiming to make solar panels standard in all new homes. The Government has ensured that solar energy will form part of amended building regulation to be rolled out later in 2025. There were 10,000 responses to MPs across the UK.
2. The organisation has made a detailed submission to the most recent NPPF Consultation as well as have contributed extensively to responding to Local Plans in the county.
3. CPRE has supported the development of Oxfordshire's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy outlining Oxfordshire's biodiversity priorities for nature recovery.
4. CPRE'S Hedgerow Heroes project has cemented their relationship with Wild Oxfordshire.
5. CPRE supports parish council networks.