



CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF COUNTRYSIDE GUARDIANSHIP

Standing up

This year marks an extraordinary milestone — 100 years of CPRE. For a century, our national charity has championed the beauty, tranquillity and sustainability of England's countryside. From the rolling fields and waterways of East Anglia to chalk downs and woodland glades beyond, CPRE has worked tirelessly to protect the landscapes that shape our lives.

Over the decades, that work has led to lasting change — from the creation of green belts to stronger planning protections and national recognition of the countryside's value. Here in Norfolk, we are proud to play our part in that story.

Strong voice

In our county, CPRE Norfolk has consistently stood up for responsible planning, safeguarded open landscapes from inappropriate development, and amplified the voices of rural communities. We have celebrated the character of our villages, the richness of our wetlands, the calm of our heathlands and the working life of our farmland.

Yet serious challenges remain. Climate change, habitat loss and development pressures demand thoughtful solutions and determined advocacy. As we begin our second century, our commitment is as strong as ever.

Together, we look ahead with optimism and resolve.

To our members: Thank you.

Your dedication, generosity and belief in our mission have powered every campaign, every conversation and every success. Whether through volunteering, donating, attending events or spreading the word, you have helped protect Norfolk's countryside — and your continued support will carry us forward.

A Century of Protecting Norfolk's Countryside

Welcome to CPRE Norfolk's spring newsletter, and to CPRE's 100th birthday!

Across the UK our 'big birthday' is being marked with exhibitions and public events highlighting and celebrating a century of countryside advocacy, and for CPRE Norfolk it offers a moment to reflect on a remarkable hundred years of standing up for the countryside we cherish.

When CPRE was founded in 1926, its early campaigners were already concerned about many of the issues we still face today: unchecked development, the loss of tranquil landscapes, and the pressure placed on farmland, wildlife and rural communities. A century on, the context has changed, but the core challenge remains the same — how to balance progress with the protection of the landscapes that define our county.

Today the pressures can feel greater than ever. Large-scale infrastructure proposals, including vast solar developments across productive farmland, raise difficult questions about land use and landscape impact. CPRE Norfolk supports the transition to renewable energy, but continues to argue that it must be delivered in the right places. In the autumn of 2025, CPRE Norfolk organised a very well attended exhibition in Dereham, setting out our position on 'Renewable's Done Well' and there are plans for this exhibition to be held in more locations across Norfolk in 2026. It has also been heartening to hear prominent voices speaking out for Norfolk's countryside, including internationally renowned sculptor Sir Antony Gormley and our new President, Sir Nicholas Bacon.



“A century on, the challenges may evolve, but the passion to protect Norfolk's countryside remains as strong as ever”

Alongside these challenges, there are real reasons for optimism. Across Norfolk we are seeing growing recognition of the importance of nature recovery. The discovery of 2 free-living beavers in the county has captured the public imagination and highlighted the potential for nature to return when given the chance. Meanwhile, stronger protections for fragile chalk streams have been proposed — globally rare habitats found in parts of Norfolk — and this reflects increasing awareness of the need to safeguard our most precious environments.

As we celebrate our centenary, CPRE Norfolk remains committed to the same vision that inspired our founders: a thriving countryside for everyone to enjoy, protect and pass on to future generations.

Kevin Jones, Vice Chair, CPRE Norfolk



Photo - Jeremy Halls

Halvergate Marshes: A Turning Point

In the south-east corner of Norfolk lies Halvergate Marshes — over five square miles of grazing marsh bordered by the River Yare and Breydon Water, now part of the Broads National Park. Once an estuary shaped by tidal creeks, the landscape was transformed in the 17th century by Dutch engineers into the rich grazing marsh we recognise today.

By the early 1980s, this remarkable landscape faced a serious threat. Agricultural policies of the time encouraged wetlands to be drained and ploughed for arable production. Across Norfolk, marshes were being converted, hedgerows uprooted and fields intensified. Halvergate stood at a crossroads.

United Voices

CPRE nationally, alongside our local branch — then the Norfolk Society — took a principled stand. Following a visit from national and county leaders, CPRE spoke out publicly, making the case for protecting the marshes' wildlife, heritage and unique character. It was not an easy campaign; economic pressures weighed heavily, and the debate was fiercely contested.

Yet sustained advocacy made a difference. Growing awareness of the environmental damage caused by drainage and over-production began to shift opinion. What followed marked a historic change in direction. In 1985, the Broads Grazing Marshes Conservation Scheme was launched, rewarding farmers for maintaining traditional marshland management rather than replacing it. Halvergate became an Environmentally Sensitive Area — safeguarded for wildlife, landscape and future generations.

Campaigning Works



Photo - Jeremy Halls

The Halvergate campaign proved a turning point. It helped lay the foundations for the agri-environment stewardship schemes that recognise farmers as custodians of our countryside.

Today, new pressures face Norfolk's landscapes, and the need for thoughtful, sustainable land management remains urgent. But Halvergate reminds us what determined local action can achieve. With the continued support of our members, CPRE Norfolk will keep championing the landscapes that define our county — just as we have for the past hundred years.

Planning Reforms: A threat to our countryside

Successive governments have changed the nature of the planning system from the laudable position where it provided a balanced approach to policy and decision making in to a structure designed to facilitate development.

The current government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill and the changes it has made, and intends to make, to the NPPF (National planning Policy Framework) are not good news for those of us who campaign to protect the countryside and landscapes from excessive and inappropriate development. These changes have required our local authorities to revise local plans and amongst other things significantly increase housing targets.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

One of the first actions of the new Labour government after its 2024 General Election victory was to remove the footnotes in the NPPF that gave communities a meaningful say as to whether renewable energy projects could take place in their local area. This was followed by a revision of the standard method for calculating local housing need which has meant that all Norfolk borough and district councils have to increase already excessive housing targets by 50% or more.

The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) which applies to Broadland District Council, South Norfolk Council and Norwich City Council will have to provide extra sites to accommodate an increase in the annual housing requirement from 1929, to 2600 dwellings. The plan's end date will also be extended to 2045. As a result of these changes I estimate that the housing target will increase from 45,000 to over 70,000 and could go even higher if a punitive buffer is imposed should the authorities fail to deliver the targeted delivery rate. (* see footnote)

Setting high targets does not speed up the delivery of new houses. Developers only build what they can sell at the highest possible price. Taylor Wimpey has just received planning permission for a housing estate of 3850 dwellings at Rackheath but the company has said it will take 30 years to deliver the housing – i.e. they only intend to build an average of about 128 houses per year.

High housing targets merely increase the number of sites allocated for development, they do not get houses built. House builders cherry pick the most attractive sites for immediate development, often Greenfield sites in the countryside, and land bank the rest. Sites for 30,000 un-built houses were rolled over into the GNLP from the previous local plan.

The GNLP was only adopted in March 2024 and has existed for just 2 years before suffering this revision. Why is the government pushing through poorly thought-out changes to planning policy that cause plans that have been prepared at a great expense and which have been examined and approved by the Planning inspectorate to be re-written so soon after their adoption?

There is little evidence of joined up thinking because another government policy, the reorganisation of local government, is likely to lead to the abolition of a number of the local authorities involved in the plan making process and will certainly cause significant changes to plan boundaries. Why not wait until these changes are in place before undertaking a revision of local plans?

Mega Solar Farms

The current NPPF re-write will also enable large scale solar schemes, such as those threatening extensive areas of Norfolk countryside, to more easily receive planning permission. Local authorities and local communities are denied a meaningful say in the determination of these NSIP (Nationally Significant) projects.

CPRE Norfolk campaigns for a better way forward for housing and renewables that enables the right kind of houses to be built in the right places with social housing needs prioritised and the achievement of net zero by 2050 through the employment of solar on roofs, Brownfield sites and other artificial surfaces. Our aim is to protect one of our county's most precious assets, its countryside.

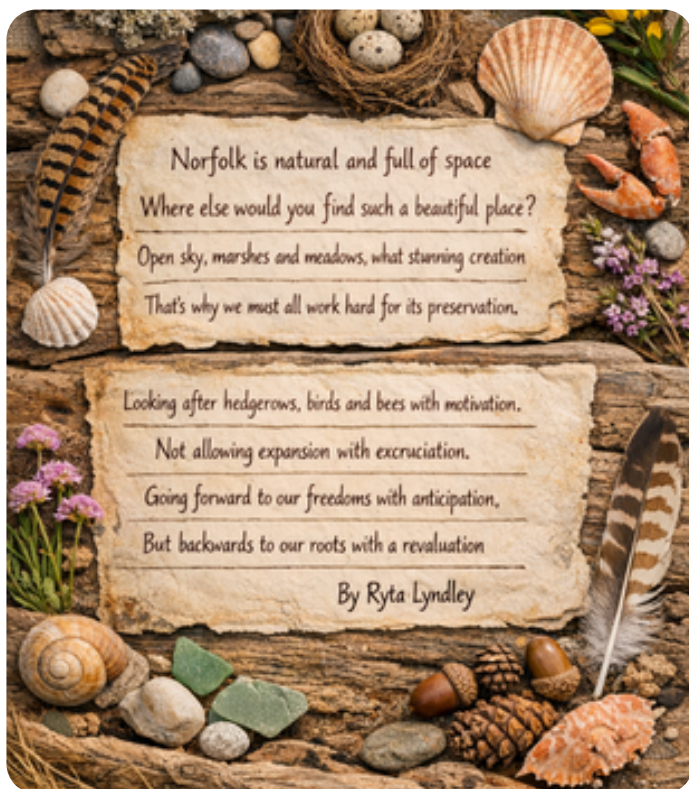
The government claims that a revision (i.e. weakening) of planning is necessary to boost economic growth although there is little empirical evidence to support this view. It is time to stop blaming the planning system and planners for the shortcomings of politicians who over the course of this century have consistently failed to deliver the right kind of housing and infrastructure that this country needs.

David Hook

Chair, CPRE Norfolk, Vision for Norfolk

*** Footnote - 70,000 houses is the equivalent of around 16 towns the size of Diss**

Love Letters to Norfolk



My Norfolk

I have lived in Norfolk for most of my life. Born here, I am deeply passionate about the culture of Norfolk ways, its traditions, language and landscapes. Long a place on the edge – a destination in its own right, rather than somewhere passed through on the way elsewhere – it has largely avoided wholesale and detrimental change.

But now, the threats facing this remarkable county, which attracts so many who wish to relocate here, risk damaging the very qualities that make it so special.

Love may be blind, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to regard the changes now being actioned as anything other than degrading to the character of our cherished piece of England.

Sir Nicholas Bacon Bt.
President, CPRE Norfolk

Your Love, Your Words, Our Norfolk

I love Norfolk because it is where my three children, James, Joanne and Daniel, grew up. Norwich and Norfolk are such wonderful places to raise children. Norwich is a safe place and allows young people to travel by bus to access such great activities.

I loved taking my children to Great Yarmouth Pleasure Beach so we could all enjoy the joyrides and the rollercoaster – perhaps I did even more than them.

I love Norfolk heritage railways, which I took all my children to and still do, including The North Norfolk Railway between Sheringham and Holt, The Mid Norfolk Railway between Wymondham and Dereham, the railway between Wells and Walsingham and the Bure Valley Railway between Aylsham and Wroxham.

I love Norfolk because there are so many great places to walk. There are so many small towns to visit and to love.

I just love Norfolk.

Cllr Paul Kendrick
Lord Mayor of Norwich

From the heart...

This Valentine's Day, we launched something a little different — a celebration of love not just for people, but for place. Our Love Letters to Norfolk campaign invites you to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and write a heartfelt poem or letter declaring what you adore most about this special county.

Your words can celebrate a memory, a favourite place, a treasured view or simply why Norfolk fills your heart.

We're collecting these love letters and will be sharing a selection throughout the year to inspire others to see this county through fresh, affectionate eyes.

For more inspiration and tips on how to get started visit:

[Love Letters to Norfolk: a new centenary campaign - CPRE Norfolk](#)

And then send your letter or poem to:

LoveNorfolk@cprenorfolk.org.uk

CPRE Norfolk Marks 100 Years with Parade and New Exhibition

CPRE Norfolk was delighted to celebrate the opening of its special **Centenary Exhibition at Diss Museum** on 14 March, marking 100 years since the founding of CPRE.



The celebrations began with a colourful parade through Diss, bringing the spirit of 1926 to life. Characters representing famous figures and events from that year included the Duke of York and Duchess of York, film star Rudolph Valentino, escapologist Harry Houdini, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson, and pioneering swimmer Gertrude Ederle. Sporting legends such as Babe Ruth, Jack Hobbs and Bobby Jones were also represented, alongside depictions of the 1926 General Strike and other moments from the year CPRE was founded.

Music from the era was performed by the Gislegham Variety Club which added to the festive atmosphere as visitors gathered for the official opening.

Following the parade, CPRE Norfolk trustee and former president, **Professor Tim O'Riordan** presented certificates recognising the outstanding work of local conservation groups helping to protect and enhance Norfolk's countryside. Awards were given to Scoles Nature Trails, Frenze Beck & the River Waveney Trust (Diss Group), Diss Community Woodland Project and the Little Ouse Headwaters Project.



The **Centenary Exhibition** tells the story of CPRE's work over the past century and highlights the importance of protecting the local landscapes we cherish today. It is **free to visit** and will remain open at **Diss Museum** until the end of **October 2026**. Members and supporters are warmly encouraged to visit and help celebrate this remarkable milestone in CPRE Norfolk's history.



A Countryside Day at Martha's Meadow

We're delighted to invite you to **Martha's Meadow** on **Sunday 7th June 2026** for a special Countryside Day in support of CPRE Norfolk.

This beautiful private meadow in Southery, West Norfolk is a haven of wildflowers, grasses and open skies - the perfect place to slow down, breathe deeply and reconnect with nature.

Join us for a relaxed day of **local stalls, guided walks and family-friendly activities**, and enjoy the chance to meet fellow CPRE Norfolk members and supporters in a stunning countryside setting.

The event runs from **10am–4pm**. Entry is free for CPRE members and children, and £2 for non-members.



Join Us for Our Centenary AGM - Tuesday, 5th May 2026

This year's AGM will be a particularly special one as we celebrate 100 years of CPRE and welcome our **new President, Sir Nicholas Bacon** — and we would love you to be there.

Our AGM will take place on **Tuesday 5 May 2026** in the Weston Room at Norwich Cathedral. Doors open at **6.30pm** and refreshments will be available before the meeting begins at 7pm. As always, attendance is **free of charge**.

The evening will provide an opportunity to reflect on the past year's work, celebrate what we have achieved together, and look ahead to the challenges and opportunities facing Norfolk's countryside. Reaching the charities centenary is a moment to be proud of — a testament to the commitment of generations of members who have cared deeply about protecting our county's landscapes.

We are also delighted that our new President, Sir Nicholas Bacon, will be joining us and will give a talk following the formal AGM proceedings. His reflections on the future of Norfolk's countryside promise to be both timely and inspiring.

The magnificent setting of **Norwich Cathedral** makes this a fitting venue for such a landmark occasion.

We very much hope you will join us for what promises to be a celebratory and engaging evening as we mark our first hundred years — and look forward to the next.

As always, attendance is **free** of charge but pre-booking is strongly advised - <https://bit.ly/CPRE-AGM2026>

Help Us Celebrate Norfolk's Young Countryside Champions

Our **CPRE Norfolk Schools Awards** is the perfect opportunity to shine a spotlight on the next generation of countryside stewards, but we need your help.

These awards celebrate the creativity, passion and environmental curiosity of young people across Norfolk. Whether through art, writing, photography or projects that explore nature, history and rural life, the entries remind us why protecting our countryside matters so much — and how inspiring young minds are in that mission.

What you can do to help

We warmly encourage all our members to spread the word. Do you know a teacher, parent, youth group leader or young person who would love to take part? Please share the awards page with your contacts, local schools, community groups and networks — every young voice encouraged to enter could help build a stronger connection between Norfolk's countryside and the generations who will care for it next.

You can find full details, entry guidance and inspiration here: <https://www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/youth-awards/>

Key Dates to Remember:

- **Entries Open:** Now
- **Deadline for Submissions:** Friday 14 May 2026
- **Awards Celebration Event:** Summer 2026

Together we can help young people explore their local landscapes, think creatively about the environment, and gain recognition for their work. Thank you for helping us celebrate and support **Norfolk's future countryside champions!**

100 Candles & a few birthday wishes

A century of countryside campaigning deserves a proper celebration... and perhaps a few carefully chosen birthday wishes.

First on our list? A steady stream of wonderful new volunteers. The kind who don't mind muddy boots, reading planning applications with a cup of tea in hand, or championing Norfolk's landscapes at local meetings. If you've ever shouted at a housing proposal in the newspaper — we may have just the role for you.

Next, we'd love some fresh trustees to help steer us into our second century. Wise heads, practical thinkers, countryside lovers — step right up (and we won't object if you bring cake).

Of course, a few new members would be the icing on that cake. Every subscription helps us stand up for the quiet lanes, big skies, grazing marshes and flint-faced villages that make Norfolk so special. The more voices we have, the stronger we sound.

And since this is a wish list... a sprinkling of donations and legacy gifts would go a long way. Think of it as planting a tree whose shade future generations will sit beneath. Supporting CPRE Norfolk in your lifetime — or remembering us in your will — helps protect the countryside long after the candles have been blown out.

Finally (and we're aiming high here), we'd quite like some planning laws with real teeth — the sort that recognise Norfolk's unique character, protect its landscapes properly, and put long-term environmental care ahead of short-term gain. Not too much to ask for a 100th birthday, surely?

In truth, our greatest gift is you — our members and supporters. For a century, you've helped defend the places we love. With your continued backing, we'll keep making birthday wishes come true for the next hundred years.



Photo - Tatiana Rodriguez, Unsplash

100
YEARS



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